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# AN ENQUIRY,

ADAPTED TO THE PRESENT CRISIS,

IN WHAT SENSE,

## THE NON-INTRUSION PRINCIPLE

MAY BE RECONCILED WITH

THE AUTHORITY OF THE MINISTRY,

THE CHRISTIAN RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE,

AND

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

BY

A FRIEND TO THE PEACE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

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## PRELIMINARY NOTICE.

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THE Author of the following pages, holds the admitted extremity of the case alone to warrant him, in offering his private views for consideration by his Brethren of the Church of Scotland, the majority of whom have staked her existence as an Established Church, on the maintenance of their sense of the principle, which is examined in the following Enquiry. Contrariety of sentiment, and determination of conduct in pursuance of their several conclusions, appear to have reached their height in the parties which divide the Church, and nothing seems wanting to bring on the final catastrophe, but decisive evidence,—confirming what many significant indications prognosticate,—that the civil powers will not sanction the interpretation, which the majority has put to such an issue: a single step more may render the schism irreparable,—with what disastrous effects upon the Church and the Nation, it were not easy to calculate. In these circumstances, the Author, who fully admits the existence and greatness of the evils, the removal of which the Church has so much at heart, and acknowledges the value of the blessings, which she desires, at all sacrifices, to restore and confirm to her people, thinks it may be permissible for him, to present the fundamental question at issue, for consideration in a point of view, which has long been to his own mind conclusive, but which, so far as he can gather from the published vindications of the Church's measures, appears to him not yet to have been thoroughly weighed by the prevailing portion of her members. And he trusts, that under the sense of the magnitude of the depending consequences, and in the spirit of candour, and of habitual self-examination,—the fruits and signs of that Christian character, which he believes they appreciate as the highest distinction,—they are still willing dispassionately to try, whether, while they have been under no mistake as to the end, they have not mistaken the means for attaining it, and are not inflicting the evils

of dissension and disunion, without the necessity of being obliged to do so, in vindication of the cause of truth and righteousness.

It was his intention to have included also the consideration of the position of the Church, in consequence of her being subject to the rights of patronage, and of the principles involved in the conflict between her and the civil power; but the elucidation of the Non-Intrusion principle has extended so much beyond his expectation, that he finds it necessary to give up that intention, at least for the present. The enquiry as to the true meaning of the Non-Intrusion principle, is the fundamental one; for, with the assertion of the Church's views on that subject, the conflict commenced, and were she satisfied, that she had put a wrong meaning on it, there ought to be no difficulty in the settlement of the other questions.

## AN ENQUIRY,

&c.

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THE Veto law requires Presbyteries, whenever the majority of the male heads of a vacant congregation in full communion, shall declare that they conscientiously dissent from the appointment of an offered pastor, to reject him in respect of such dissent. The extent of the power thus recognised to exist in the people, was brought to issue in the late negociation between Sir George Sinclair and the Non-Intrusion Committee of the General Assembly. It was proposed to introduce into the enactment for settling the question, explanatory words, sufficient to put beyond all doubt the power of the Church Courts, to reject a presentee,—in respect of the people's reasons, whatever they were,—or in respect that though not considered conclusive by the Presbytery, the reasons were entertained by such a portion of the parishioners, as, in the opinion of the Presbytery, to preclude the prospect of the presentee's usefulness,—or as, in the opinion of the Presbytery, taking into account the reasons, and the degree of their prevalence, to render it inconsistent with their duty, or with the spiritual interests of the parish, to proceed with the settlement of the presentee,—such words, in short, as would recognise in the Presbytery the utmost freedom of judicial power, but would at the same time imply an act of judgment by them on the people's reasons, or on their state of mind in reference to them, and leave on the Presbytery the responsibility of sustaining the reasons, or the people's resulting state of mind, as sufficient grounds for the rejection. But whenever it became evident to the Committee, that this was the import of the proposed measure, and that it was not intended to concede to the Church Court the power of rejection of the pre-

sentee, irrespective altogether of the people's reasons, or of their state of mind in regard to them, and upon the mere ground, that the people did in point of fact continue to dissent from the appointment, they declared that the measure could not be acceded to. What the Committee had all along desired, was the recognition of a rule, which would make it imperative on Presbyteries to reject presentees, in respect of the mere dissent of the people ; and they have declared, that they went into the negociation with Sir George Sinclair, in the belief that his plan would at least leave it in the power of Presbyteries to carry the same rule into practice voluntarily, in the exercise of their judicial power when dealing with every particular presentation.

When it is objected, that the principle of Non-Intrusion, as so understood, is inconsistent with government, and that consequently it must subvert the relation between clergy and people, and bring anarchy into the Church, its defenders deny that this is its nature, and they not only disclaim any opinions or intentions having that tendency, but admit that government is essential to the well-being of the Church, and is fully recognised as such by the Church of Scotland. But they hold, that, co-existing with the right of rule in the clergy, there is in the people the right to judge, whether an offered pastor is proper and suitable for them, and that if, in the exercise of this right, the people shall, sincerely and conscientiously, and after being, if necessary, reasoned with by the Presbytery, disapprove of the person offered, and decline to receive him, there is nothing in this act of the people inconsistent with their being subject to government, and nothing involved in their power of rule which entitles the clergy to disregard the rejection. The nature of the relation between pastor and people, it is said, requires the consent of both parties ; and the possession by the latter of the faith and Christian knowledge which are common to both, and their vast and direct interest in the appointment, qualify and entitle them to have their consent held indispensable. But if the people shall be found to be in such a state of mind, from faction or heresy, as to make it necessary to subject them to discipline, it is admitted that their privilege ceases, because one of its necessary conditions no longer exists ;—which state of matters, however, is so little to be anticipated among the class of persons, whose sentiments are to be taken as expressing the mind of the parish, as to require, and to have had provided for it, no special rule or exception, in the law

which declares the dissent of a majority to have an absolute effect in excluding the presentee.

This explanation does not appear to remove the difficulty. The occasion is that of constituting the office of pastor and spiritual ruler in one of the successive holders of it: a series of such acts will constitute the office in the whole of the rulers of the Church. The law declares, that the people, the subjects of Church rule, except in certain extreme cases held to be of unlikely occurrence, shall have an independent power of controlling the appointment to the office, and that their state of mind in so doing, and their reasons for the act, except in the peculiar cases referred to, are not to be cognisable by their spiritual rulers, the Presbytery. True, the people must declare they are conscientious, and actuated by a feeling of Christian duty,—but this is merely the people judging themselves. True also, the Presbytery may deal with the people by reasoning and persuasion,—but there is nothing of Church government in this: they may do the same with the civil ruler, or the patron, or another Presbytery; and the Church has anxiously disclaimed all intention, by such dealing, of acting as a Church government having authority over the people, or otherwise than as friends or advisers, and declared, that after having submitted their views to the people, they must acquiesce in their resolution. It is likewise true, that the non-intrusion principle confers on the people a negative power only. They cannot compel the patron to present, or the Presbytery to induct, whom they wish; they can only exclude whom they do not wish. They cannot even by their own authority formally reject a presentee. It lies with the patron to present, and with the Presbytery to induct or to reject. But so resistless is the effect of the people's dissent held, that the Presbytery, whatever may be their opinion of their reasons, are absolutely obliged to reject in conformity with it. Thus, the people, so far as their part goes, are in this act, which is that of the constitution of the holders of Church government, themselves substantially without or above government.

Hence, should the people, under the self-deception, which is a very usual accompaniment, and one of the most dangerous qualities, of error, be influenced, in dissenting, by ignorance or prejudice, (both of which, when in action, border closely upon, and run into sin,) or even by those kinds or degrees of sin, which are not characterised as faction or heresy, any of the multitude of injustices and corruptions, proceeding from pride, or vanity, or self-

righteousness, or a spirit of judgment, or jealousy of authority or place, or the power of bad or interested counsel, which, combining with the appearance, and even, in the individual's own esteem, with the desire of good, daily enter into men's hearts, and control their conduct,—the Presbytery must not only suffer it to pass, without the power of correction, but must concede to it its desire.

It seems difficult to deny, that this is to deprive the people of the protection of Church rule in its peculiar and most important province,—that of judging and guiding their state of mind and feelings; and that the non-intrusion principle, as thus explained, formally takes away from the people the benefit of government, and declares them independent of it, on the occasion of the appointment of a pastor; whereby the proper subject of Church government is in this instance abandoned, and left free to whatever impulse may sway it.

This consequence is the necessary result of what is maintained to be the place which the people hold, in the act of receiving a pastor. The individual members of the Church are presumed competent to judge of a presentee's fitness to be their pastor; their interests are deeply concerned in the appointment; the consent, at least of a majority, is essential; and they are absolutely independent of rule in their act, being responsible only to God and their own consciences. Such are the premises, which are held to warrant the conclusion of an absolute power of rejection. Taking as a foundation the asserted right of the people in this respect, it appears not easy to hold, that any power of government will remain with the Church rulers.

The clearest right which a man has, because founded on the highest obligation of duty, is that of thinking and acting in conformity with the dictates of his conscience. In such an act, the qualifications for competent and independent decision are far plainer, than in regard to the acceptance of a pastor, because the whole matter is within the private sphere of an individual's duty; while the induction of a pastor, being a public matter, connected with the government of the Church, is not so clearly liable to be affected by the views of individuals. In the case supposed, we have competent knowledge, the right and power of judgment, clear interest and responsibility, and undoubted independence, so far as this can be held by a private church member. In every such case, whether it relate to thought or word or deed, a man is

*at least* as independent and as responsible, as he is in the act of receiving a pastor, and no Church government can be substituted by him in the place of his individual faith and conscience. If, then, this personal standing of men disables Church government on the induction of a minister, why not always, as often as the people differ from their rulers? Why, if not in this case, should the Church government be entitled to deal authoritatively with a man in any question, whether of life or opinion or doctrine, if he shall say deliberately, that he conscientiously thinks them wrong, and himself right? If knowledge, interest, responsibility, independence, afford a reason for saving a man from being amenable to the judgment of his spiritual superiors, this should be conceded to him, whenever he seriously and conscientiously adheres to any of his opinions or actions that are questioned. The primary question is not, in either case, whether there actually exists evil, liable to the reprobation of the Church rulers,—that cannot be ascertained, unless the Church rulers have power to examine;—but, whether the people, or an individual, can possess any right, to such an effect as to prevent the Church rulers from ascertaining, whether it does exist, and if it does, from dealing with it according to its nature. If the people stand in this position, on the occasion of the presentation of a minister, still more, by a stronger title upon the same grounds, must every individual so stand, in regard to his acts and principles, the fruits of his private liberty.

To meet this difficulty, a distinction is taken between a state of mind of the people that requires discipline, and that which does not; and it is said, that in the former case the people will be held to forfeit their privilege, but in the latter it remains with them. It appears not to be meant, that the people in the latter case may not be actuated by a wrong motive, but merely that the Church Courts do not hold it sufficiently far wrong to justify the use of discipline, or that they have formed no judgment of it at all.

But if knowledge is possible, is it permissible for the Church Court to be in uncertainty as to the state of mind of the people, in regard to any thing that may be evil, and especially in a matter relating to the constitution of the ministry? This cannot be maintained. It is the duty of the clergy to inquire into, and as far as possible know, the spiritual state of the people in all respects. This is the necessary prerogative of their office, and its most essential uses flow from it. It might be different, did the people,

on the occasion of receiving a pastor, occupy a higher place in regard to the Church government than in other matters, and hold, as it were, a co-ordinate jurisdiction with it, in so far as this may be involved in the necessity for their consent, on such an occasion. In fact, something of this sort seems implied in many of the arguments, that have been adduced in support of the non-intrusion principle; but it rests on the effects attributed to the right of private judgment generally, which, if allowed, would prevent the interference of the Church Court with the people's dissent for whatever cause; for a right absolutely independent necessarily implies an independent power to use it. If the Church Courts, then, are entitled and bound to know and appreciate the state of mind, in which the people dissent, and consequently the reasons of the dissent, it follows from the nature of their office, that they are not at liberty to wave judging, whether the state of mind, and the reasons, are good or bad, and if bad, whether they are such as to make it fit and profitable, that the dissent that has such a foundation should be allowed.

It is possible to suppose a case, where the Church rulers, though they may think objections insufficient, and may not wholly approve of the people's state of mind, may see it right on the whole not to press the acceptance of a pastor, against whom the objections are entertained. They may do so from various considerations of tenderness towards the people and the Church; but in so acting, they will satisfy themselves that the indulgence will not strengthen insubordination, or encourage sin. Thus the act even in this case must flow from the judgment of the Church Court, and is a special concession, taking all the circumstances into view, including, as more especially important, a judgment of the real grounds of the people's dissent, in all their nature and tendencies. Unless the Church Court proceed on this principle, how can it discharge its sacred duty of overseeing the people in spiritual things, and guarding them against evil, whether it come from without, or exist within themselves?

Except in such a case as this, the dissent of the people on grounds not expressly adopted by the Church Court, cannot rightly be sustained by it. Liability to discipline affords no criterion in such a case, because to preserve the people from error and sin is the province of the Clergy, whether they be under discipline or not; and to allow them to act, and still more to give effect to their act, when it involves what is sinful, or is injurious to them or others,

or tends to be so, would be a dereliction of their duty, whatever the degree of evil may be. There is no reason for directing Church rule only against matured sin, requiring discipline, but holding lesser or incipient sin, which equally requires the authoritative dealing of the Church rulers, though not, it may be, in the form called discipline, to be out of its control, and entitled to gratification,—as if the Clergy had spiritual jurisdiction only in regard to the former, and not in regard to all sin, or as if there was a difference in kind, or could be safety for the Church, when sin actuates her members in any form or degree. The Church would not recognise such a limitation of her spiritual jurisdiction, in regard to any other of the acts of the people, done in pursuance of their private liberty.

In fact, the Veto law makes no such distinction as this, and qualifies the effect of the people's dissent by no condition whatever. The qualifications are contained in the after vindications of the law, and (as expressed in the Statement submitted to Government) they embrace the case of the people being in the condition of faction or heresy, which are said to form necessary and implied qualifications of their right to exercise the privilege. Granting the implication, the provision against the evils even of glaring magnitude, which may mislead the people's judgment, is quite insufficient. It calls Church rule into exercise, on the occurrence of certain full-grown forms of sin, but holds it dormant as to others not less formidable,—taking cognisance of the heresies of the head, but passing in silence, it may be, darker heresies in the heart and will, and disregarding altogether the incipient forms of sin, when alone in many cases it is possible to meet and conquer it.

But the Non-Intrusionists deny that the people, in exercising the Veto, are put from under the judgment of the Church rulers: they merely exercise the inalienable right of private judgment, without which they would not be responsible beings; but the public judgment, producing an ecclesiastical effect, flows from the Church Court alone, which also has given all its effect to the dissent of the individual members of the Church.

I fully admit the right of private judgment in the true sense. There is no evil, but much good, in the people both forming an opinion, and expressing it, provided they do so with a regard to their place. What is wrong is, that their opinions and judgment are held supreme in their effects, and incapable of being judged of by

the Church Court. It is of little consequence, whether the Veto law be held to make the act of the people itself an act of judgment or government, or not. Its fundamental evil is, that it supersedes and extinguishes the government of the Presbytery over the people on this vital occasion. But in truth the Veto law converts into supreme judgment, what in its own nature is not so. If the people's dissent, proceeding from their independent will, gives them an irresistible power over the Presbytery's judicial function, and obliges the Presbytery to reject, it is mere trifling to say, that the effect does not imply a right in the people, authoritatively to decide, and substantially to judge, the presentee's claim. The Presbytery judge nothing, except that the people have dissented; and the people must have dissented, it is presumed, because they judged unfavourably of the presentee's qualifications. In either case, the Presbytery are the mere organ for giving effect judicially to what the people have resolved. It is a similar part to what a Civil Court performs, when private parties record an agreement in its books, whereby the private act is converted into a decree of that Court, in which decree there is merely the judicial will of the Court, but not its independent judicial mind. The substance of what is so decreed is merely the will of the parties, and as it is quite within their competency so to bind themselves, the Courts readily lend their aid to clothe the private act with the forms of a judicial decree, so that it may receive full effect. The non-intrusion principle puts the Church Courts into a position similar in substance, in regard to the act of the people towards a presentee.

The case just put deserves farther consideration, in order to elucidate the principles on which the present question depends. The Civil Court will judge, whether the deed expresses what the parties truly consented to, and whether the matter of it be lawful; but when satisfied, it inquires no farther into the effects of the transaction, or the motives of the parties. In like manner, it may be said, that the Church Court will inquire into the reality and fairness of the dissent of the people, and see that it is vitiated by no corrupt practices, and that the people have not rendered themselves unfit to give it, by entertaining principles manifestly inconsistent with the doctrines of the Church. Will the satisfactory judgment of the people by the Church Court in these respects, bind them to give effect to the dissent, without farther consideration? The non-intrusion principle says, that it does. On the contrary, the writer of these pages, on grounds to be immediately

established from the Standards of the Church of Scotland, denies that the Church Court would be justified in resting at the point that has been indicated. The ordinance of rule in the Church is not a ministerial function, for giving effect to the mere will of the people, in any matter that concerns the public government of the Church ; and in no matter, whether public or private, can it govern its own acts, merely by evidence of the absence of obvious evil from the conduct or intentions of the people, or of the sincerity of the people's minds in regard to their actions. Civil rulers are concerned only about external things, and what indicates civil rights and duties in regard to them. But the ministry are the judges of the people according to *conscience*, and the substance of what is judged is, that they may see,—not according to the response of the consciences of the people judging themselves, but according to the response of their own consciences,—that the people are actuated by faith, righteousness and truth, and if not, that they may correct what is wrong, and lead them back to what is right. If they shall sustain or approve of any acts of the people, which their own judgments do not adopt as possessing these qualities, or if they shall shrink from judgment altogether, and devolve it upon the people's conscientiousness, they desert their post, they deprive the people of the guide and safeguard, which are essential to their safety, and they expose them defenceless to the inroad of the worst evils.

This consequence will not be prevented, because the effect given to the dissent of the people is recognised and appointed by the Church rulers themselves. It is all the worse for this, especially since it is declared a *fundamental* law, and consequently is quite beyond the power of modification. Of the things beyond the competency of rulers, the surrendering of the power of their office into the hands of the ruled, is most clearly one. If rule is not essential, and if the people can rule themselves, they may ; but if this cannot be said, their act of renouncing the exercise of their office, and giving it to the people, can confer no ability on the people to do without it, and cannot lessen the evils of their being deprived of it. The Church Court's resolution to hold itself bound by the conscientious dissent of the people, as a fact *per se*, is a dimission of its office, and a forsaking of the people, for they are entitled to the protection of the Court by their judging their dissent, and the Court is not free to withhold it. To say, as is often done, that as

the General Assembly may reject in one case judicially, because of the mere dissent of the people, without regard to its own opinion of the grounds of dissent, or of the state of the people's minds in giving it, so may it in all, and consequently it may make a law as a permanent rule prospectively to the same effect for the government of Presbyteries,—is just another form of this view of the case. The assumption, on which the reasoning rests, is not well founded. The General Assembly has no power to decide one case on the principle supposed,—that is, it has no constitutional competency to do so, any more than a sovereign has to surrender his functions of rule into the hands of his subjects. It may do so *de facto*, just as any other unconstitutional act may be committed, subject to the consequences. Both Charles and Louis had given up their essential prerogatives on the demand of their people, before their thrones were subverted, and their having done so, gave great facilities for bringing about that result. Their unconstitutional acts (which they were, independently of all questions as to the original causes of difference) were not rendered safe and constitutional, because they, who should have retained and defended the functions of rule, consented to part with them. If the decision or law of the Church could secure, that no harm will befall the people in the performance of the act, in which they are secluded from the supervision of their spiritual rulers, it might be permissible. But this it cannot do, for in the attempt the Church is met by a contradiction of first principles. Clergy have been appointed in the Church, because rule is essential, and the people are not safe without it; and consequently the clergy cannot use their prerogative of rule to declare, that they are not necessary, and that the people may do without them.

It is a singular feature of the case, that in the event of a dissent by the people, the principle contended for allows no alternative to the Presbytery, but the rejection of the presentee. This follows, perhaps not unnaturally, from the Presbytery not being allowed to form any judgment on the grounds of objection, or the people's motives for urging them, and very probably Presbyteries, finding themselves in this position, will desire to have as little as possible to do with the people's reasons; for if they have once committed themselves to a disapproval of them, by endeavouring to overcome them by persuasion, if they fail, they will stand in the awkward predicament, of having to reject a presentee on account of a dissent, which they believe a wrong act. But why should the Pres-

bytery be not merely prevented from dealing with evil, which they may discover on such an occasion, but compelled to adopt it, by rejecting the presentee? Assuming the consent of the people, as well as the presentation of the patron, and the will of the Presbytery to induct, to be necessary, the refusal of consent from a wrong motive should simply be regarded as a void refusal, and the settlement suspended, till the wanting element of a valid induction is supplied, by the people being brought to a right state of mind. Instead of this, the Presbytery is bound to sustain the evil act of the people, and so homologate the evil. Unless the people have a co-ordinate power with them in the settlement, which withdraws them from their jurisdiction, the Presbytery, whenever they reject a presentee because of the people's dissent, sanction that dissent. A judge must decide in conformity with the verdict of a jury, whatever his opinion may be as to its soundness, because the jury have not merely a co-ordinate, but an exclusive, jurisdiction over the fact. But the Church repudiates such a plea for the people, as subversive of Church government; and consequently, when she does not correct the people's act, but makes it the ground of her own farther act of rejection, she virtually approves of that act, and takes the responsibility of it upon herself. If rejection shall take place on grounds involving sin, how can the Presbytery look for a blessing on the people, or their protection from evil, in any part of the future procedure? And when, from the cessation, at a time of vital importance, of the action of an essential organ, deep-working evil shall appear in the will of the people, the Church,—which, like old Eli, has thought it enough to substitute for her fatherly and priestly authority, the weak dissuasive of,—“ Nay, my sons, for it is no good report that I hear,”—will not on that account be acquitted of blame for the evil, more than he, who was condemned, “ because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

But farther, if the consent of the people be absolutely necessary to a valid induction, on what ground can the Church be justified, when she without their consent inducts a pastor over a people under discipline? This circumstance might be a good reason for suspending the settlement, but it cannot convert the incompetency of the people to judge, into a substitute for their consent, if that be an essential element, any more than the bad conduct or wrong principles of a daughter, would entitle her parents to marry her against her will. If the Church of Scotland holds that Church

government gives her Presbyteries such a power over disobedient parishes, it must be on the ground, that it involves in it something materially different from what it has been represented to be in reference to the Veto law.

In the foregoing observations, I have pointed out generally, what appear the inconsistencies and evil consequences of the non-intrusion principle, as now maintained, and the insufficiency of the leading arguments in support of it to relieve it from those charges. These objections will appear upon a broader basis, in the farther prosecution of the enquiry. What shows, that the Reformers of the Church of Scotland could not have held views, similar to those advocated by the supporters of the principle as so explained, is that they placed the office of the Church rulers on such a footing, in relation to the spiritual condition and safety of the people, as to exclude the possibility of the people assuming the power, which the principle concedes to them. I shall proceed to make this appear, by the quotation of some of the leading passages.

“ The Kirk of God,” it is said, in the Second Book of Discipline, “ is sometimes taken for them that exercise spiritual function among the congregation of them that profess the truth ;” which definition leads to an analysis of the nature, ends and extent of spiritual jurisdiction, as standing in the office-bearers of the Church, and as contrasted with the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate.

—“ The Kirk, in this last sense, has a certain power granted by God, according to which it uses a proper jurisdiction and government, exercised to the comfort of the whole Kirk. This power ecclesiastical is an authority granted by God the Father, through the Mediator Jesus Christ, unto his Kirk gathered, and having the ground in the word of God, to be put in execution by them, unto whom the spiritual government of the Kirk by lawful calling is committed. The policy of the Kirk flowing from this power, is an order or form of spiritual government, which is exercised by the members appointed thereto by the word of God ; and therefore is given immediately to the office-bearers, by whom it is exercised to the weal of the whole body.”

Such is the doctrine of this book, as to the reality and the source of spiritual jurisdiction, and as to the exclusive right of the office-bearers to exercise it.

The essential diversity of spiritual from civil jurisdiction is then

stated, “albeit they be both of God, and tend to one end, if they be rightly used, to wit, to advance the glory of God, and to have godly and good subjects.”

One of the distinctions is this, “It is proper to kings, princes and magistrates to be called lords and dominators over their subjects, whom they govern civilly, but it is proper to Christ only to be called lord and master in the spiritual government of the Kirk, and all others that bear office therein ought not to usurp dominion therein, nor be called lords, but only ministers, disciples and servants.” But to shew that it was intended by no means to qualify the reality and extent of the power of the Church rulers by these words, but merely to describe the spirit in which it must be exercised, because of the direct representative character in which it is held, it is immediately added,—“*for it is Christ's proper office to command and rule his Kirk Universal, and every particular Kirk, through his Spirit and word, by the ministry of men.*” And lest the power of the Church rulers should be held of an inferior kind to that of the magistrate, and so his person should not be subject to it spiritually, it is also added,—“*Notwithstanding, as the ministers and others of the ecclesiastical estate are subject to the magistrate civil, so ought the person of the magistrate to be subject to the Kirk spiritually, and in ecclesiastical government.*”

Then follows a very accurate statement of the separate objects of civil and spiritual government, in relation to one another, and to their proper subjects. In the latter point of view, this is expressed in these weighty sentences :

“The magistrate commands external things, for external peace and quietness among the subjects; the minister handles external things only for conscience sake. The magistrate handles external things only, and actions done before men: But the spiritual ruler judges both inward affections and external actions, in respect of conscience, by the Word of God. The civil magistrate craves and gets obedience by the sword and other external means: But the ministry by the spiritual sword, and spiritual means.”

Still farther, to exclude every doubt as to there being a real difference between the places of rule and of obedience in the Church, any more than in the State, the explanation of the different ministries of the Church is prefaced thus :

“As in the civil policy, *the whole* commonwealth consists in them that are governors or magistrates, and them that are governed or subjects: So in the policy of the Kirk, some are appointed to be

rulers, and *the rest* of the members thereof *to be ruled and obey*, according to the Word of God, and inspiration of his Spirit, always under one head and chief governor, Jesus Christ." "For albeit the Kirk of God be ruled and governed by Jesus Christ, who is the only King, High-Priest and Head thereof, yet he uses the ministry of men, *as the most necessary middis* (means) for this purpose."

Finally, to shew the effects which would follow in the Church, from the right observance of the order of government so set forth, the whole subject is at the end of the book summed up thus: "So to conclude, all being willing to apply themselves to this order,—*the people suffering themselves to be ruled according thereto*, the princes and magistrates not being exeeemed, *and these that are placed in the ecclesiastical estate rightly ruling and governing*,—God shall be glorified, the Kirk edified, and the bounds thereof enlarged, Christ Jesus and his kingdom set up, Satan and his kingdom subverted, and God shall dwell in the midst of us, to our comfort, through Jesus Christ, who, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, abides blessed in all eternity. Amen."

It is unnecessary to quote the various passages of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the other standards of that time, bearing on this subject, because their general agreement with the doctrines of the Second Book of Discipline will not be disputed. The whole doctrine is implied in this leading principle,—"The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate."

Before proceeding to the principles of these books as to the admission of ministers, it is necessary to notice, that all the powers of government that have been set forth, belong to Presbyteries in relation to vacant parishes. When a church is vacant, it does not cease to be under government. Even under its pastor, a church is subject to the overseeing power of the Presbytery, and when the pastor is removed, it falls under their direct charge, and their power, it is said in the Second Book of Discipline, "is to use diligent labours in the bounds committed to their charge, that the kirks be kept in good order, to enquire diligently of naughty and unruly persons, and to travel to bring them in the way again, either by admonition or threatening of God's judgments, or by correction;"—also, "to take heed, that the Word of God be purely preached within their bounds, the sacraments rightly ministered,

the discipline rightly maintained, and the ecclesiastical goods uncorruptly distributed."

It is in a Church having such a government as has been described in the preceding extracts, that we are to consider the meaning of the principle of Non-intrusion. The Standards of the Church of Scotland suppose a Church formed, and not a Church either unformed or in ruins, and consequently we must interpret the directions they give as to the appointment of ministers, in relation to her existence in a formed state, and in consistency with the nature and powers of her established government.

The passages of the Second Book of Discipline which bear directly upon the question of Non-intrusion, are as follows:—"Election is the chusing out of a person or persons most able for the office that vaikes, by the judgment of the eldership (Presbytery,) and consent of the congregation, to whom the person or persons be appointed. The qualities in general requisite in all them who should bear charge in the Kirk, consist in soundness of religion and godliness of life, according as they are sufficiently set forth in the word. In this ordinary election, it is to be eschewit, that no person be intrusit in any of the offices of the kirk, contrary to the will of the congregation to whom they are appointed, or without the voice of the eldership." Ch. iii. § 4, 5.—"The power of election of them who bear ecclesiastical charges, pertains to this kind of assembly (Presbyteries,) within their own bounds, being well erected, and constituted of many pastors and elders of sufficient ability." Ch. vii. § 15.

It seems impossible to reconcile an absolute power in the people to prevent the admission of an offered pastor, in the exercise of the election described in the above extract, with the efficiency of the Church government as set forth in the previous part of the book, for this would make void the power of the government in the ways before mentioned. Neither does such a meaning appear necessary for giving full effect to the rule so expressed, for if the people have a right regard to the Presbytery, as the ordinance for rule over them, and if the Presbytery have respect to the just interests and desires of the people, (*which alone is the case supposed,*) there will never be a settlement without the consent of the people, and yet the power of government will not be in the least compromised on the one hand, nor the true freedom of the people on the other. Even the words of the rule seem not adapted to express such an

absolute right as is contended for. If under the definition of election, the consent of the people was placed on the same footing in point of independence with the judgment of the Presbytery, there was no need for the farther caution, as to the mode in which election was to be exercised; but when the will of the people is regarded as receiving its guidance and true effect through the medium of the judgment of the Presbytery, then an injunction, that the Presbytery should neither tyrannically overbear, nor blindly follow, the will of the people, receives a pregnant signification. And that this is the place in which the Presbytery stand, appears plainly from the farther rule, that the *power* of election, that is, of the joint act of Presbytery and people, lies with the Presbytery.

The form of Church government framed by the Westminster Assembly merely declares, that no person against whom a congregation could show just cause of exception should be ordained. As the General Assembly, in approving generally of the book, reserved power to discuss farther the distinct rights and interests of Presbyteries and people in the calling of ministers, it must be held that they adhered to the expression of the principle as in their existing polity, which supposes not mere objections of the people to be disposed of, but their consent to be obtained.

I have referred to the Second, and not to the First Book of Discipline, as best expressing the principles of the Church of Scotland as to this matter, because there is no comparison between the two in regard to their claims to authority as Standards of the Church. The latter was written in May 1560 by six individuals, Winram, Spottiswood, Willock, Douglas, Row and Knox, in the midst of the confusion, and at the very seat, of civil war, and when the Reformed Church could hardly be said to have an existence in Scotland. The first General Assembly was not held till six months afterwards. The book was prepared, in consequence of an appointment from the Council of State, dated 29th April, and it is itself dated 20th May, just three weeks afterwards. The writers submit the work as containing their own judgments simply, and report its contents to the Council for adoption or rejection by them. Such a book might be expected to contain something of the spirit of the system afterwards established in Scotland, as having emanated from men who held an important place in bringing it into order, but to hold the foundations of the Church to be contained in the work of any six individuals, how

eminent soever, prepared in such circumstances, would place her in a position which her members would hardly desire to occupy.

It seems to have been a consciousness of the defects of the First Book of Discipline, that led to the preparation of the Second. The work was done in a manner befitting its importance and character, as the exposition of a Church system. Committees were appointed by the General Assembly from year to year of its most distinguished members; they reported their labours to the Assembly; the work was carefully revised during successive sittings; and the book was approved of in 1578, after the discussion by the Church at large of every disputed point.

One of the differences between the two books consists in the manner of election to offices in the Church; but though the First Book recognised direct election by the people alone, this is so qualified as to show that its authors had no thought of their possessing such an independent place even in this, as the modern non-intrusion principle concedes to them. The rule is thus expressed:

“ It appertaineth to the people, and to every several congregation, to elect their minister. And in case they be found negligent therein the space of forty days, the best reformed church, to wit, the church of the superintendent with his council, may present unto them, a man whom they judge apt to feed the flock of Christ Jesus, who must be examinated as well in life and manners, as in doctrine and knowledge.”

Particular directions as to examination are then given, and the subsequent procedure, including the non-intrusion injunction as then understood, is set forth as follows:

“ If his doctrine be found wholesome and able to instruct the simple, and if the church justly can reprehend nothing in his life, doctrine nor utterance, then we judge the church, which before was destitute, unreasonable if they refuse him whom the church did offer; and they should be compelled, by the censure of the council and church, to receive the person appointed and approved by the judgment of the godly and learned; unless that the same church have presented a man better or as well qualified to the examination, before that this foresaid trial was taken of the person presented by the council of the whole church. As for example the council of the church presents to any church a man to be their minister, not knowing that they are otherwise provided: in the meantime, the church is provided of another sufficient in their

judgment for that charge, whom they present to the learned ministers and next reformed church to be examined. In this case, the presentation of the people, to whom he should be appointed pastor, must be preferred to the presentation of the council or greater church, unless the person presented by the inferior church be judged unable of the regiment by the learned. For altogether this is to be avoided, that any man be violently intruded or thrust in upon any congregation; but this liberty must with all care be reserved to *every several church*, to have their votes and suffrages in election of their ministers. But violent intrusion we call not, when the council of the church, in the fear of God, and for the salvation of *the people*, offereth *unto them* a sufficient man to instruct them, whom they shall not be forced to admit, before just examination, as before is said."

Thus, where the council of the church presented, on account of the negligence of the vacant congregation to do so for forty days, their presentation was authoritative; and, consequently, if this took place for a fault, arguing perhaps indifference, much more must the council be held to have reserved power to make such presentation, on observing any evil in the people in the exercise of the privilege. But the case of non-election from negligence on the part of the people, does not seem the only one contemplated, or rather, the lapse of forty days seems to have been held in every case sufficient to infer negligence, to the effect of enabling the council to present; and yet, without any exception, the over-ruling of an arbitrary *veto* by the people is provided, when opposed by the favourable judgment of the council. The words are perfectly general, both in describing Non-intrusion, and the exception from it; and unless they include presentations by the council, from whatever other cause the people might have failed to find a person to their mind,—cases which could not but often occur, since only forty days were allowed for inquiry,—these are left unprovided for by any rule. If this is the case, of course no conclusion can be drawn, except from the case of non-presentation from actual negligence. This, however, appears by no means to exhaust the terms of the rule, especially as the case of the council's presentation, in competition with that of the people, when rejected on account of the insufficiency of the presentee,—which might infer no blame on them whatever,—is expressly included.

Except on the assumption, that the dissenting will of the people was not absolute, it is impossible to account for the language

used in the early period of the Scotch Church in regard to this subject.—The First Book of Discipline, in the passage before quoted, plainly supposes objections judged of by the council. In the Assembly 1570, the report of a Committee in regard to the functions of Bishops (who were regarded as visitors) was approved of, bearing, that in their bounds they might appoint ministers, “ with consent of the ministers of that province, *and consent of the flock, to whom they shall be appointed* ;” but in the very same Assembly, the special matter is taken up of the procedure upon presentations, as to which a report given in on the subject bears, that the visitor shall give the presentee letters testimonial in the manner described, “ providing always, that the consent of the flock where he shall be appointed be had, *or else a reasonable cause be showed by them wherefore not.*” Commonly however, the consent of the people is mentioned without qualification, and for reasons to be afterwards noticed, this is the form of expression which best corresponds with the right condition of the Christian Church, and which is evidently preferred in the authoritative writings of the Church of Scotland. It cannot be supposed, that these different modes of expression are contradictory of one another. There is no indication that the language did not express the common opinion, or was disapproved of. The apparent opposition may be reconciled on the principle contended for, that the people were at all times under the power of the judgment of their rulers, and consequently their consent was virtually subject to it, while from the harmony that prevailed, the result was brought about tacitly, and not by means of the stating of formal objections, and therefore no express mention was made of them. Again, Calderwood reports (p. 383.) the Answers of the Committee of the Synod of Fife, then the most distinguished in the kingdom, to certain questions propounded by the King to the Church, two of which questions and answers were as follows : “ *Q.* Is not the consent of the most part of the flock, and also of the patron, necessary in electing pastors ? *Ans.* The election of pastors should be made by those, who are pastors and doctors, lawfully called, and *who can try the gifts necessarily belonging to pastors* by the Word of God ; *and to such as are so chosen,* the flock and patron *should give their consent and protection.*” “ *Q.* May the Session be lawfully elected by the ministers only, without consent of the whole congregation ? *Ans. Not ;* for the ministers direct and moderate the election by the Word, and the congregation *obeyeth, and giving their consent thereto.*”

Calderwood reports other answers, which state the necessity of the consent of the people, without qualification. It is hardly conceivable that the Committee of the Fife Synod could have returned such answers, or even have stumbled upon the mode of expression they make use of, unless they had been giving utterance to a familiar principle of the Church.

Even in 1649, when the Church party was dominant both in Church and State, and patronage was abolished by the Legislature, with instructions to Presbyteries “to proceed to the planting of the kirks, upon the sute and calling, or with the consent of the congregation, upon whom none is to be obtruded against their will,”—the General Assembly, in carrying into effect the new law, were careful to reserve the government of the people in their own hands, even in the exercise of a dissent. The regulations provided, that the Session should offer a person to the Presbytery for trial; “but if it happen that the major part of the congregation dissent from the person agreed upon by the Session, in that case the matter shall be brought to the Presbytery, who shall judge of the same; and if they do not find their dissent to be founded on causeless prejudices, they are to appoint a new election as above specified. But if a lesser part of the congregation or Session show their dissent from the election, without exceptions relevant and verified to the Presbytery, notwithstanding thereof the Presbytery shall go on,” &c. Here the power is reserved to the Presbytery to judge of the motives of the objection of a majority. The objections might not be in the form of a specific charge, inferring blame, but might apply to mere unsuitableness, or want of power to edify, which class of objections by a *majority*, was relevant for the Presbytery to consider, and to give effect to, if not founded on causeless prejudices, and still more, of course, (though not stated,—the expressions being those of studied delicacy,) if not founded on any positively wrong or sinful feeling. It is quite evident, that if the people, on the ground of having absolute power to give or to withhold their consent, had refused to disclose the reasons for it to the Presbytery, this would have been evidence of a state of mind towards their spiritual rulers, much worse than causeless prejudices against the presentee.

In the act 1690, ch. 5, when the Church party, though not dominant, was powerful, the place of the Presbytery is preserved still more clearly, the disapprovers of the person proposed by the heritors and elders, being appointed to “give in their reasons, to

the effect that the affair may be cognosced upon by the Presbytery of the bounds, at whose judgment, and by whose determination, the calling and entry of a particular minister is to be ordered and concluded."

Even the Veto law, in its original form, appears to have been intended as a mere modification of the patron's right, for it put a limit to the people's independence, and saved the church's government, by declaring, that if the people should not have accepted of the patron's presentee within six months, the presentee of the Presbytery under the *jus devolutum* should be inducted, without being subject to rejection, "*according to the general laws of the Church*,"—so deeply rooted in the Church was the principle, that the people could not rise above the power of their rulers. It was no doubt inconsistent to give the people an absolute veto against the patron, because, if their dissent from the nomination of the Presbytery was to be disregarded, on the assumption that such dissent must be on insufficient grounds, when opposed to the judgment of their spiritual superiors, there could be no reason for taking it for granted, that it must be well founded, as against the presentation of the patron. The law, inconsistent as it was, however, saved to a considerable degree the authority of the Church rulers, so as to enable them authoritatively to apply the proper remedy in case of undue delay ; and the infringement of their office consisted only, in their depriving themselves of power to judge of the acts of the people, in reference to the patron's presentations. But this redeeming feature of the measure no longer remains. The clamour against clerical usurpation, joined with the evident inconsistency of the distinction, as well as the natural movement forward of extreme opinions, have led the Church to expunge from the law the ultimate remedy reserved to herself, and, apparently in direct contradiction to the authority of the First Book of Discipline, to place her Presbyteries in the extraordinary predicament, of allowing their own offered ministers to be rejected by the people *ad infinitum*, without the assignment of any reason whatever, and without the right to inquire into and judge of the grounds.

This result is vindicated, by its being held necessarily to flow from the requisite of the consent of the people to a valid induction, and the unlawfulness of settling a pastor contrary to their will. A consent, any other than what flows from an absolutely independent will and judgment, is treated as an absurdity and a mockery,

and it is maintained, that a people who submit to be deprived of their independence in this sense, must lose the consciousness of personal responsibility, and fall into slavish subjection. Such representations owe their apparent plausibility to an ambiguous use of the terms "consent" and "will," and to an assumption, which is quite unfounded, that spiritual rule, though never ceasing to operate on the people, interferes in any degree with their true independence. The whole tenor of the laws of the Church of Scotland down to the Veto law, may be appealed to, to prove that perfect and uninterrupted rule, and the spiritual freedom of the people, were never considered incompatible, and that the modern interpretation of the non-intrusion principle first made them so. The exposition on general grounds of the reasons of this, will require some detail. But the extreme importance of the subject will, I trust, afford an excuse for the following endeavour to state them; in which the object will be to explain, what may be supposed to have been some of the grounds of the solemn representation, given in the Second Book of Discipline, in the passages quoted above, of the source, nature and ends of government, both spiritual and civil.

It is too little adverted to in these days, that the relation of rule and obedience ought to exist in the heart by faith, as an essential truth and practical principle of divine origin. Power, or right of rule, is not an arbitrary creation, or a temporary expedient, founded merely on utility or policy, nor is the obligation to reverence and obey it, a counterpart measured by such considerations. Both belong to the essential and eternal nature of things. They are found as principles throughout all creation, and they govern every form of intelligent being. They are inseparably interwoven into all the natural relations of man, whether families, or tribes, or nations, which derive their coherence and characteristic qualities, from the modes in which these principles are developed in them. The breach of them destroys the social or corporate unity, which, through their operation, had become an intelligible existence, capable of benefit to its members; but straightway the divided elements form new combinations, through the springing up in them of the same all-pervading principles. They constitute the bond both of natural and spiritual relations, both of unions of interest and unions of affection. They may be, and, more or less, ever have been abused, whence have proceeded

strife, oppression, division and confusion. This has arisen from the evil of the instruments, not from the failure of the principles. Equally in nature and grace, they are God's mode of causing unity,—through ordinances acting under relations of reciprocal weakness and strength, ignorance and wisdom, dependence and protection,—in the practical operation of which, the manifold affections and sympathies of the heart find their appropriate objects, in the most exquisite varieties.

Why men cannot be protected and carried forward in improvement as insulated individuals, it is idle to speculate. The fact is involved in the constitution of his being, and that is enough. Those who will in simplicity receive this truth as a fact, are at no loss to discover abundant reasons of goodness and beneficence for its being so ordained. Of these the main one is, that as man is not permitted to confine his views to himself, but has been made for the higher object of knowing and manifesting his Creator, of whose unity, as well as other communicable qualities, he is to be the image, a provision was necessary for bringing him into this position, by destroying insulation, and creating unity ; and this is perfectly attained, by the full and combined concentration of the moral affections, the intellectual energies, and the spiritual convictions, in the development of the principle under consideration. If any one will ask still a higher ground than this for the principle, he may find it, in what the universality of its operation would lead us to expect,—that it has its origin in the mode of existence of the source of all being. That subordination, not less perfect than equality and communion, are there found, even the appellations of the Divine Persons are sufficient to show, and the fact is otherwise in express terms revealed. With this, as the source and essential principle of rule and obedience, nothing need be said to prove, that the place of rule implies no superiority of worth in the ruler, nor the place of obedience any degradation in the ruled ; and that they are consistent with the most perfect equality, and with the closest communion.

The emphatic testimony of the Second Book of Discipline to the true nature of spiritual power, renders it unnecessary to support what has been stated, by the quotation of Scripture, which it is expedient to avoid in a paper of this description. But I cannot forbear reminding the reader of the express statement of the Apostle Paul,—which is cited in the Westminster Confession, as one of the proofs of the Christian ministry,—that the gifts, which

the Saviour received on his ascension, for perfecting and establishing the Church, saving her from deception and error, and bringing her in unity to the standard of perfection, were,—not any of the powers in individuals, which the non-intrusion principle has exalted into their protectors against evil,—but the ordinances of ministry themselves. Eph. iv. 7-15.

The mode of operation in the Church of the principle of rule is two-fold. There is, first, the act of faith in the people, recognising the power of rule in the ministry, with its counterpart in the ministry, who by faith take and use the place given them. This is the position, in which, by means of the characteristic affections and sentiments correspondent to it, unity is produced, and the highest benefits result both to clergy and people. It is true, the life of the Church stands in the whole, and, viewing the matter in reference to the recipient, the ability of the Church to have ministries, and their strength when she has them, depend upon the vigour of that common life. But then, that life comes through the operation of the One Spirit, who works diversely, so that the individual members of the Church, through faith rightly moving them, do not arrogate rule to themselves, but disclaim and refuse it, and look for and recognise it in the ordinances duly constituted in the Church; in whom, in correspondence with this faith, it appears by the operation of the same Spirit, in discernment and power for the good of the whole. Regarded otherwise than thus, the ordinances of rule could not be connected with the communion of the body of the Church, but would be something alien and lordly, the formal and cold channels of command, respected merely because of the power which they possess, and speedily deprived of influence, and disregarded. To make the matter more intelligible by an analogy in nature,—the Church exhibits, but in a far higher manner of existence, what we see in the forms of animal and vegetable life, (which, from the unity in creation, may be regarded as types or resemblances of essential spiritual life,) where the one life of the individual, while it circulates through, and animates, every part, puts forth its chief energies in the development of organs, having functions for the benefit of the whole, and depending for their efficiency on the common vigour and vitality of the mass, yet in no way subject to be confounded with or controlled by it. So in the Church, the common faith and life, on which all depend, give every member his place and duty, working in him, responsibly and intelligently,

to the building up of all as one,—most being individual members, some also being ordinances, having general powers and functions, for reaching to and knitting together the individuals,—the whole proceeding from, and centered in, the One Head over all. Such is the Church of the New Testament, and the Church supposed in the Second Book of Discipline, unto which, says the Westminster Confession of Faith, “ Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world ; and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.”

The mode of operation of the principle of rule which has been just described, virtually includes the other, which is the exercise by the ministry of the power given them, for judgment of doctrine, for discernment of the spiritual condition of the people, and for authoritatively correcting, guiding and strengthening them. The former raises the Church into an organised body ; the latter constitutes one of its functions, when so existing. The more perfect the former, the less appearance will there be of the latter in any harsh or repulsive form ; and the operations of power, instead of showing themselves in judgment and discipline, will appear only as conducing to the weal, the comfort and the blessing of the whole Church. Accordingly, these are the forms of expression studiously chosen in the Second Book of Discipline, to describe the effects of rule in the Church, in harmony with the examples in the writings of the Apostles. But the primary object of the power of Church rulers is to detect and extirpate sin, to which the members of the Church are continually liable, and the Scriptures, and following them the Standards of the Church of Scotland, are explicit in their testimony, that this an essential means for that end.

To say that the Scriptures, or the Standards of the Church, are the bond of her unity, arises from a misapprehension. The Scriptures are the written record of the truth, the belief of which is salvation, and the Standards are methodised abstracts of certain important parts of that truth. Both provide materials for, but neither constitute, faith and spiritual life, which are conditions of the spirits of men believing the truth so presented to them. Though the world were full of Bibles, yet if there was no man believing it, there would be no truth or life in the world. The truth thus recorded for faith is of two different classes,—the one rela-

ting to the right condition of individuals, of which the main principle is, justification by faith,—the other relating to the place and uses of individuals, when in that right condition, involving the principles and operations of the Church as one body, under ordinances of rule. Without the former, there could be no Church for want of materials; without the latter, there could be none, for want of the materials being builded together. Both these classes of spiritual truth act and re-act on each other, for the protection and improvement of individuals, and for the strengthening of the Church. The seat of both is in men's spirits. Consequently, the reality of unity is formed in the Church, not by the fact of the Scriptures containing truths for creating unity, nor by her members believing in the truth of ordinances of rule abstractly as contained in the Scriptures, but by their present faith in the actual existence of those ordinances, in those in whom they are constituted in conformity with that truth,—they being the joints and bands, by which the Church is “knit and compacted together,” to the end of “making encrease of itself in love.” There may also be a misapprehension in the mode of holding, that the Head of the Church is the bond of her unity. He indeed is so, in the highest and most exclusive sense. He is ever the source, centre and sustaining power of it. But He is *present* in His Church,—in the people as well as the rulers, and one of the modes by which He reveals his presence, is the faith of the people, which recognises the rulers as the means of causing unity by being representatives of Himself, and the gifts in the rulers, which enable them efficaciously to do so. He who should refuse regard to the reality of the place of rulers, lest this should detract from his obedience to the Great Ruler in the heavens, would be like one who should justify disregard for a viceroy, by respect for his absent king. Still greater is the misapprehension, of supposing the feelings and objects of private individuals as such, and their sympathy with one another, as interested in a common object, to constitute the bond of unity. This would amount only to voluntary alliance from mutual kindness and agreement, but would not approach to the reality of the unity of the Church. The unity of a nation does not consist in the reciprocal good-will of the individuals, and their interests in the success of their several private pursuits, but in loyalty to the Sovereign, the acknowledgment of a general government, respect for judges and magistrates as holding functions of the State, interest in the institutions which manifest the wisdom

and power of the kingdom, and obedience to the general laws flowing from the supreme authority, by all which the individuals feel themselves bound together, and have the consciousness of a common history and interest, as one people. The nature of the Church is similar.

Since rule and obedience are thus the foundations of order, and the mode of unity, it is evident that there can be no difference in principle, between spiritual and civil government. There are essential differences in their objects, spheres and modes of action, which must not be confounded. But in what are common to both,—the reality, the authority, the need, the depth, the evils of failure, the blessings of the right use,—there ought, if possible, to be more completeness on the part of spiritual, than of civil rule. Hence, the Church, without compromising her principles, but in her vocation of establishing peace and truth, is enabled to fortify the foundations, and increase the benefits, of civil rule, by teaching men, how the regulation of worldly affairs, and the preservation of external order, may be connected with, and spring from, things pertaining to life and godliness.

When these principles exist as fundamental principles of faith, the members of the Church will be bound together as one, and blessing be diffused by reciprocal action throughout the whole ; and thus they will be delivered from that corrupt regard to selfish interest, which destroys true faith, and, forgetting self, will yet find their highest individual blessedness and usefulness. Our hearts ought by faith to be, as it were, fashioned in the mould of expecting the blessing and protection of God through His ordinances, as having His rule over us, and of rejecting the thought of intruding into that place. An obedient heart is the channel for the reception of blessing ; but a proud self-depending spirit, rejecting obedience practically in the Church, hardens the heart against grace, and exposes it to the most awful self-deception.

A breach of these principles, by the setting aside of a lawful ordinance supported by them, is an evil of quite a different kind from that of a failure in duty in a man's private sphere. It consists in overthrowing the *foundations* of government, so, like high treason, involving in it all lesser evils. Yet it may be committed by those who, in their personal character and habits, are professed lovers of virtue, and even orderly and peaceable, nay who are enthusiasts in benevolence, possessed it may be by a half-truth, the most dangerous form of error, because it gives zeal and an

overpowering motive to break down the safeguards of order and true liberty.

To put an end to such deceptions in civil matters, the Scriptures declare, that men are, essentially and by conscience, under ordinances of God, and that the power actually existing is the ordinance intended,—“there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God”—“ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.” It is at the same time true, that from evils both in the places of rule and subjection, there have been frequent conflicts between rulers and people, and that, because the evils hindered the development of a higher condition of good to which they were advancing, benefits have in a number of instances resulted from the conflicts, which, had the evil been wanting, ought to have been produced, in a much higher degree, from the harmonious working of the two elements in their proper spheres of action; and, in consequence, many of the present holders of power owe it to the result of such conflicts. In former times, however, and speaking generally, the changes that have occurred in this way chiefly afforded proofs of the imperfection and mutability of the human depositories of the great principles of unity, whence their stability has not been perfectly exemplified in practice; and whenever the convulsions, which had disordered civil relations, had spent themselves, there has hitherto been evolved an order of settled authority, the condition and sign of the establishment of which has been, that the persons, in whom the right of government was constituted, were freed from the direct control of the mere will of the people. Undoubtedly, however, especially in later times, much laxity of opinion has existed as to the source of power; and many, mistaking the fact for the principle, and converting it into a principle, infer from the origin of actual modes of power, that it derives its authority from the mere concession, and stands by the allowance and will, of the people; whence the will of the subjects is made habitually to press on the exercise of rule, in which circumstances, the corruption of both must be the result.

But the evil has worse consequences, when it exists in the Church, the spirit of which goes much deeper than that of the State, and truly brings out the moving cause of what is done there, though the individuals concerned may, from the difference in their objects and states of mind, be unconscious of it. The constitution of the Church does not rest upon mere fact, but upon the foundation

of eternal principles of truth, as they exist in the spirit by faith in the word of God. The rulers of the spiritual kingdom are acknowledged by the Church, to have the direct spiritual rule of Christ, and its subjects are, the desires, affections and judgments of our inmost being, the very posture and tendencies of which constitute either sin or righteousness, and have a commanding influence over the whole man. If the standing and relations which we have in these respects, as the conditions of safety and rectitude, are overthrown, the consequence, even when this is done unwittingly, must be to produce weakness, and to open an inlet for sin ;—when done wilfully, must lead to the highest evil.

It may be thought, that the fallacy is involved in these views, of expecting good in one quarter as a remedy against evil in another, while the one has, in itself, as little pretensions to good as the other,—of appealing from the corruption of the people to the integrity of the rulers. This is not meant, and it is fully conceded that the rulers are in themselves no better than the people. What is maintained is, that God's grace for keeping and blessing the Church cannot be looked for, except in consistency with the relations by which he has connected its parts together. His pledge is, that rulers, abiding in their places of rule, shall both be kept themselves, and be the means of keeping their people ; and that the people, fulfilling their several responsible places as individuals, in faith that God will give them light and guidance in spiritual things by means of His ministers, shall be so kept. And such is the perfection of all systems that have this original, that the very act of heartily consenting to take the places assigned to each, in the spirit of rightly using them, itself brings along with it as a consequence, much of the good which they were designed to confer.

Let us apply these principles to the case of the appointment of a pastor over a vacant church, and see in what way the requisites, which the Second Book of Discipline describes as “ the judgment of the eldership and the consent of the people,” subject to the “ power ” of the Presbytery, will be brought into effect.

True communion requires, that the Church members,—the main strength, and the intelligent and responsible fellow-partakers in the work and hopes of the Church,—shall be dealt with, in regard to the appointment of their ministers, not as the passive subjects of their ministry, but as containing the substance and power

of it, being, yet as under subjection, the discerners and judges of it by faith, for the health and nourishment of their souls. Consequently, when a person is proposed as minister by the ordinance having power to do so, there ought, in the perfect condition of the Church, to be the presentment of him to the people, for their discernment of his gifts, their judgment of him in the Lord, and the full statement to their rulers, and the complete knowledge by them, of all that is in their hearts about him. The Church ordinance is not set without principles, or with arbitrary power, in the matter. Nor have the rulers in themselves all the truth and excellence, which are to be manifested in the Church, but merely the power of discernment and judgment, when the materials are obtained from the proper quarters. The dealing with the people is one of the main sources of the light, by which the ordinance is to be guided in the exercise of its function, not, however, by obedience to the *will* of the people, but by obtaining the proper materials for the exercise of their own, in which is placed the rule of Christ for the safety of the Church,—the rulers, in the exercise of this power over the free children of God, “though chief, being as they that serve,” and the people, though under subjection, “having that perfect love which casteth out fear.” The object of the procedure is to give the people a pastor, suited to their true condition, and according to their just desires, one who is best fitted for correcting evils in them of which they themselves may not be fully sensible, for binding them together, and for raising them to a higher state of excellence than they have yet attained,—of the need as well as the best means for which, it is the proper function and grace of the Church ordinance, by dealing with the people, to discern and decide. It is because of the prerogative of the Church rulers in these respects, that the people are under obligation to submit their objections to their judgment. The end should certainly be, either the giving by the people of their consent or call, or a judgment by the Church rulers, that the settlement is not expedient. The case supposed is one, where, from the Church being highly spiritual, the basis and framework, which hold every thing secure and in its right place,—the reciprocal discernment and power, and confidence and obedience,—are fixed and unchangeable, yet all asperities of feeling are removed by the element, which cement together all the parts. But, as essential to the existence of this solid foundation, the objections and judgments of the people must be made under subjection to the Church ordinance, who, by

their office, have power to bring the matter to a final end by their decision, binding on the consciences of the people to the extent to which it goes, that is, to the effect of securing their obedience, even though they may find it necessary, with the faithfulness, as well as tenderness, of true pastors, to overrule their objections or murmurs, when they see that they arise from evil or ignorance.

In a perfect church system, the office which the rulers thus discharge towards the people, will not be described as the power of hearing and deciding on objections, because such words suggest an idea of the position of all parties, presentee, people and rulers, out of harmony with that of the close unity of the Church, and of the relation about to be formed, as well as with the state of the fact as it should ordinarily appear. Hence, the form of policy of the early Reformed Church of Scotland, which, with less of system and of elaborated detail of the understanding, has more simplicity and spirituality than the Standards of the Westminster divines, makes no mention of objections by the people to a presentee, but states their consent as one of the essentials of his induction; and the General Assembly, adhering to the spirit of its own Standard, did not acquiesce in the description of the place of the people given by the English divines, as inferring a right to state objections. A Church, in which the ordinances of rule are strong,—strong in faith, and in the power of discipline, and with unquestioned authority over the people, as was the case with the early Scotch Church,—is able to describe in decisive terms the necessity for the consent of the people, because in such circumstances the language cannot be misconstrued or abused. Nevertheless, the statement of objections, and the power of the Church Courts to dispose of them, is necessarily included in the constitution of the Church, to be evolved in the procedure towards an induction, if circumstances should require it; and, accordingly, as we have seen, even the earliest Reformed Church of Scotland did not scruple to express this in plain words on fitting occasions.

Now, if it is possible for the Church to be in such a condition as has been described,—having true unity, a faithful ministry, and people living in intelligent obedience, because they believe in the reality of the rule over them,—it is self-evident that church rule, though not losing its control over the people in any stage of the business, will yet not interfere with their responsibility and independence; that is, the full responsibility of individuals, and their

independence to the fullest extent possible, consistently with their being not insulated, but parts of a system united under a moral and spiritual government. They can do every thing that falls within the responsibility of the sphere of duty of individuals. They cannot decide, or express sentiments obliging the Church rulers to decide, according to their will ; but this is not their place, and consequently does not involve their responsibility. They leave this to the Church rulers, as the proper judges of it.

That it is not only possible for a Church to be in this condition, but that it is the standing constitution of the Church to be so, a deviation from which implies a fall, is a position in proof of which I appeal to the Scriptures, as expounded by the Standards of the Church of Scotland. It is a Church in this condition, that the Second Book of Discipline supposes and describes. That book makes no supposition, in regard to the matter of induction, of corrupt Presbyteries, or tyrannical Assemblies, or self-willed people, and has no more set forth the organization of the Church with a view to such a case, than the British Constitution contemplates the breach of its essential principles by Sovereign, or Parliament, or subjects. The need of the consent of the people to the induction of their pastor, is not a remedy or protection to them against the Presbytery. It is part of the natural operation of a harmonious system, of which all the parts are supposed to work consistently together : and it can be used as a remedy or protection to the people, only if this will be in consisteney with the principles of the system. Whether it is so consistent or not, cannot be gathered from any literal expressions in the Standards, because these all describe the Church as acting in a sound state : and remedies for disorders emerging in essential organs, can be discovered only by considering the nature of the system as a whole. This will receive particular examination in the sequel.

It is not degrading or injurious to the people, to stand to their rulers in the relation supposed. Wherever the principle of rule is involved, it is the necessary position of those who are under it to hold a similar relation. No one supposes a soldier enslaved or dishonoured, because he cannot leave his place of obedience, and control that of his commander ; or that subjects are oppressed, because they must submit themselves to their Sovereign, and to the magistrates and judges under him, and have no votes in their nomination. Yet it is common in the speeches and writings of the Non-Intrusion party, to find the people described as being

treated as slaves or children, because they have not an authoritative voice in the appointment of their ministers; and even grave Doctors of the Church have enforced the argument, by the similitude of the appointment of a man's lawyer or physician, thus treating the Church, which has in her the idea of more universal, perfect and deep-seated rule, than the State, or any of its subordinate institutions, as holding in this respect an analogous position to what involves no idea of rule whatsoever, or even essentially any relation of a moral or spiritual character, and where the relation, such as it is, may be formed or broken at any time by the mere will of the party.

The nature of the Church excludes such representations altogether. The sphere of the people's liberty is that of their private responsibility, and they can have no powers but what are consistent with the principles of the Church generally, of which they are only a part, and with the integrity of the other essential parts. Individuals are independent within their own sphere, and the Church rulers can neither place compulsion upon them, nor relieve them of personal responsibility, in regard to it, but must leave them to fulfil its duties in the freedom of their own minds, having merely the power of discerning their state of spirit, so as to admonish, comfort or strengthen them, and of using the discipline of the Church for their recovery, in case of plain disconformity to its precepts. The origination of the office of minister is not within the private sphere, because its effect is, to create an office-bearer, having public functions, including the government in spiritual matters of the individuals, and forming a portion of the general Church government. The private motives of individuals, whether explained or unexplained, cannot in their own nature control a public function.

The argument for exempting the people from subjection, founded on their vast interest in the appointment, is fallacious. Soldiers have the like interest in the qualities of their officers, and subjects in those of their rulers, but this is allowed to be no reason for giving them control in their appointment. In all such cases, the benefit of the relation evolves itself from the independence of the power of the ruler. The spiritual privileges of individuals in the Church do not operate to the control of the spiritual rule over them, or raise them to an equality with it, but find their proper value in the recognition of it, as being, as an ordinance, superior to them. To teach the people that their absolute

will is a condition of the constitution of the ordinance of rule in their pastor, and so inherently superior to it, tends to destroy the perception of its spiritual effect, and to substitute for it one of those modes of self-deception in religion, against which the Scriptures warn us as the deepest and most dangerous forms of sin. High as the standing of individual members is in the Church, and however more so it may be brought, it can never rise out of the place of obedience to the rule of Christ in the ordinances appointed for that end, and still less into that of controlling them in their origination.

It is often urged by the defenders of the Veto, that if the consent of the people is not absolutely free from control, and decisive in its effect notwithstanding of any opinion which the Church Courts may entertain as to its grounds, it is not consent at all, which must be absolute, in order to be real. One of the leading writers says, “ The notion that the Presbytery is entitled to demand the grounds of the people’s dissent, and if they think the grounds insufficient, to refuse effect to it, and to proceed to intrude, is manifestly inconsistent with the doctrine, that the people have any rights, properly so called, in the matter at all, and implies that the Church Courts are entitled to treat them as slaves or children, who, however kindly they may be listened to, have no authority to do any thing, that shall certainly and *ipso facto* be valid and effectual in the management of their affairs.” And the same writer, illustrating the matter by reference to the provision in an act of Parliament in 1707, which requires the consent of three-fourths of the heritors of a parish to the transportation of the church, says, “ Has it ever been contended that the Court of Teinds were entitled to call upon the heritors to state the grounds why they withheld their consent, and if the Court thought the reasons insufficient, to set aside their opposition, and to order the erection of a new church? Will it be asserted, that there is any thing more full and stringent in this act of Parliament, than in the Second Book of Discipline, about *consent*; or that there is any thing in the Second Book of Discipline, more than in the act of Parliament, to limit or explain what is implied in the consent that is required? And if neither of these things can be asserted, what good ground can there be for putting an interpretation so very different upon the terms of the two documents?” The same writer also observes, that “ if the people are to state and substantiate the reasons of their opposition, while the Church Courts are to decide on the validity of these

reasons, this is virtually to deprive the people of all **RIGHT** whatever in the settlement of their ministers, for nothing can be properly called a right, the effective exercise of which depends wholly upon the judgment or discretion of another party." The answer to these questions and statements is, that what they suppose to exist in the Church is altogether alien from its nature. A right in the Church, and a right by civil law, cannot be stated as analogous, because the latter has no relation to the state of conscience or to the moral government of the individual who holds it, but merely gives rules relative to the possession of external things for peace sake. Hence, the dominion of individuals over their private rights, viewed in the light of mere civil law, is absolute. A man may do what he will with his own. This effect is adequate to the limited object of the civil law. Even in this department, there is a qualification of the principle, and an ascent towards a higher, in the obligation laid on individuals to part with their private rights, when reasons of public policy require it; and in like manner, in the operation of public laws which affect private rights, the opinions of individuals are not allowed to frustrate them. From the nature of the Church, as an institution for preserving and perfecting men in faith and conscience, and uniting them under **ONE** head, Church rights acquire their form from the ends of the Church, and the conditions of its unity; while what is lost in absoluteness, is designed to be more than recompensed in the conscious unity of the parts, and in the experience of the power of government, as implying no personal superiority of individuals, and as the means for conveying safety and blessing. The great objection to the non-intrusion principle is, that it brings into the Church, instead of the grace of a spiritual principle, a hard, unbending, superficial rule of the civil law governing external things, recognising in the people a vested right in the prerogative of resisting their spiritual rulers, and satisfying themselves. Is there, therefore, no right in the people,—is their consent a nonentity,—because these must not be used to dismember the Church, and are essentially qualified by reference to the unity of her operations? They are as real as any civil rights, though from being contrasted and not similar, they have quite different qualities. Their limitation arises, not from any excluding effect of rights in others, but from the faith of the people themselves. The form of their enjoyment is similar to that of the enjoyment of many political and social rights, whilst, from the subject of the spiritual relation being that region of our being, where

all are equal, and where the best affections should be in action, the description of its nature and effects must be much more elevated, but yet without infringement of the principles of the union. The people have the same right to have good pastors, that subjects have to have good magistrates and judges. The guarantee for their preservation is the same, as what secures respect and honour to a wife, and nurture and defence to children; or rather it is spiritually, what this is naturally and typically,—the reality of the relation, the faith out of which it springs, the affections it engenders, the responsibilities it creates, the vast issues dependent, the obligations of duty, the blessings of faithfulness, and, in fine, the power and grace of the Head of the Church, exhibiting themselves in rulers and people in these various forms. All the peculiar benefits of a relation having such properties, would be lost, were the nature of the relation subverted, by the constitution of absolute rights in the people, whose interests are provided for in this form, and not in any other, and whose will and desires are good and Christian, and capable of receiving beneficial gratification, only when they conform themselves to this necessary law. If the people's rights are absolute, why are not rather the rulers'? The latter are expressed in Scripture, absolutely and without express qualifications, while the former, though, I admit, not less real, are established more by presumptions, and general reasonings from the nature of the Church, than by express statements. But no difficulty is felt in qualifying the powers of the ministry, and by this means creating rights for the people, by considerations of the description referred to. Taken absolutely, the rights of the rulers will extinguish the place of the people, as has been exhibited in the Romish Church; and those of the people so taken will extinguish that of the rulers, as is the necessary tendency of the Veto law. The right condition of things is not the medium between these two extremes, (for this would be mere compromise, and the truth is not a middle between opposite errors, but an essentially different thing, which may be fallen from in opposite ways,) but for the members of the church to stand by faith in the right relations of their places. If the Church falls from this, by the abuse of power, she will be oppressed by spiritual tyranny; if by the breach of the spirit of obedience, the evil will be spiritual lawlessness and confusion.

If I have not entirely misapprehended the nature of the Church,

as set forth in the Standards of the Church of Scotland, and especially in the Second Book of Discipline, far from an absolute need of the people's consent being available to them, as a means of preserving them from the effects of evils in their spiritual rulers, the Church can only be restored from such a state, by their refusing to adopt that remedy ; and if such a power shall be conferred on them by a fixed law, and they get into the spirit of it, she will inevitably be destroyed. The Church, and all her parts and functions, stand by faith. What will restore the soundness of spiritual rule, when it has decayed, is the faith of the people in the purpose of God to guide the Church by the ministry, and not their faith in themselves to check it. Faith of this last-mentioned kind will cause it to decay more and more ; but faith of the former kind, according to every ground of confidence which the members of a Church can have, must inevitably be the precursor of its restoration.

Unfortunately, when the state of a church is such as to call for a remedy, there will be a strong temptation to take a wrong one. Suppose that, instead of being in the state of unity described above as its perfect condition, the Church, from the declension of that faith and love which produced it, has become unspiritual and divided. Here, rule will be seen, approaching to the heartless exercise of superiority, bringing into the Church, instead of grace, the notion of right, in the law sense of the term, and sometimes presenting the features of tyranny ; while obedience will have degenerated into indifference or apathy, or been exchanged for judgment or resistance. In such circumstances, unsustained by the faith, and weakened by the unsubdued self-competence of the people, the Church ordinances must necessarily be weak, without heart or power to fulfil their proper functions ; the people will appear the victims of the prevailing evils ; and, in this dissolution of the Church almost into its elementary fragments, much of its remaining life will be found scattered among the individual members. It is the necessary condition of such a state of things, that enlarged faith as to the higher ends and condition of the Church, will have much decayed ; men will chiefly be concerned about their individual interests ; and hence, when there occurs a revival of zeal for religion throughout the body of the Church, the value of faithful men will not be seen in its true light ; the power of individual wills will be trusted to for the remedy, with little idea that the life and faith of the Church as a body should develope themselves, (as has

been the case at all former periods when the Church was in a prosperous state,) alternately as product and cause, in the strength of the ordinances; men will not reverence the ministry for its own sake, but will perhaps be ready to despise and revile that class of ministers, whose principles they blame for the evil, and at the same time to follow with a blind admiration, and therefore not altogether from true faith, those who promise them deliverance; while the desire of individuals, humbled by the discipline of adversity, will appear to be most set on the restoration of a faithful ministry, and the correction of the prominent evils under which they have suffered.

In such circumstances as these, which appear to me to represent many of the features of the Church in this country, an authoritative Veto in the people will naturally suggest itself as a remedy for the evils complained of, because the interests of individuals are uppermost in men's minds, and the necessary relation to this of the place of rule, is not rightly seen, and not appreciated. But it is never to be left out of view, that the matter in question involves the constitution of an ordinance of power, and of power in the highest sense of the word,—that of Christ in his appointed channels for discerning and judging the consciences of men. In the Presbyterian Church, the whole of this power is in the minister, whose office is in question, and in courts, of which these ministers are the life and soul; and there is no authority above them, standing free from the control objected to, the holders of which might neutralize its effects. In checking an abuse in appointments to an office, the integrity of its nature must not be touched. The ordinance of power in the Church, which has been too much abused to oppress the life and privileges of the individual members, is not on that account in itself a bad, or other than an essential thing; any more than political power, which a tyrant may exercise for the destruction of private happiness, is in itself not good and essential. The remedy, in either case, is not to raise up the power of the subjects to lay hands permanently on the root of the power, the holders of which have oppressed them. The places of the two are opposite, of opposite qualities; and, however outraged feelings may at a time have forgotten bounds, and worked their own redress, these principles must not, by a fixed and established law, be intermixed and confounded together.

The Veto law fixes in the people, in the absolute and legal sense of right, a power which leaves their wills supreme and above

ordinances, and so, depriving them of spiritual government, it to this extent takes from them the means of grace, or unchurches them. It is an attempt to gain, by means of a positive rule, dealing with the mere will of the people, irrespective of any knowledge or superintendence of its spiritual condition, a result which can flow only from an elevated state of faith and unity in the Church, and which has then an essentially different quality, in the relation which it bears to the acknowledged and fatherly authority, which measures and guides it ; and hence it places rulers and people in such a position to each other, as must interrupt the blessing of the relation. Farther, the law is defended, on the express ground, that Presbyteries cannot be trusted to protect the people from injury in the choice of ministers, and thus, reversing God's way of using the faith of the people to strengthen the ordinances appointed to keep the Church, the people are taught, that their safety does not lie in those ordinances, but in their own wills independent of them. Nay, to sum up the subjection of ordinances to the people, the presentee offered by the Presbytery itself is subjected to the absolute right of rejection by the people, the supremacy of whose will must bend to no power whatever. It may be true that Presbyteries, in the present state of men's minds, would prove weak in the defence of the people ; but if so, the only remedy is, by faithful teaching to advance the people in true Church unity and order, so that they may strengthen the hands of their rulers ; which state of mind will itself prove a mighty defence, while the contrary must perpetuate the inefficiency of the rulers, because their strength depends on the faith of the members of the Church.

The only state of things in which such a power as this might belong to the people, is that of the Church being held to be disorganized and dissolved. There would then be no alternative, and necessity would form its justification. In a ruined monarchy, or a defeated army, the wisdom of the judge, the care of the magistrate, the foresight and power of the general, all go for nothing, and the individuals must save themselves by their insulated efforts. When the ship, which carried Paul, went to pieces at Melita, her crew and passengers got to land as each best could, " some by swimming, and the rest on boards and broken pieces of the ship," without farther benefit from the master or pilot. Such, in truth, is the principle of an absolute Veto by the people ; for, on every occasion on which a matter proper for the judgment of the spiritual ruler is withdrawn from it, and placed under the absolute judgment of the people, it is virtually implied, that as to that mat-

ter Church rule, and consequently the Church, are extinct. Nor is there any point at which the disorganizing principle could cease its operation, because, as it forbids the people to have faith in the ministry, as an authoritative ordinance, compared with their own judgment, the people, wherever they have arrived, have still before them the same indefinite call to encroachment on the powers of the Church rulers. The grounds, that are held to justify the first step,—the right of private judgment, and the responsibility of every man for his individual salvation,—necessarily involve all the rest.

The power of offering an absolute bar by their mere will to the intrusion of an unacceptable presentee, is, therefore, not an admissible remedy against such an evil, because the principles of the Church require, that the ministry be, by the faith of the people, established in the very position from which such a power would remove them. Neither have the people the competency to exercise such a power with safety, nor is it requisite for their peculiar place in the Church, that they should be vested with it.

Personal government, depending on individual conscience, was never intended to be charged with the duty of keeping the members of the Church. It is, indeed, essential for co-operation with the means provided, having as necessary a relation to them in order to produce a beneficial effect, as the eye has to light and the objects beheld, in order to produce vision. But individual conscientiousness by itself affords no certain test of truth or righteousness, and does not even afford a pledge against freedom from the greatest corruptions. The victims of the most degrading superstitions, the perpetrators of the worst crimes in the name of religion or liberty, have had no lack of sincerity. If it be said, that it is an abuse of the word so to apply it, it must be remembered that it admits of no other meaning, when the actors are themselves the judges of their acts. All I mean by these illustrations is to show, that individual conscientiousness is not a safe guide, to preserve men from evil. It may be replied, that neither can the superintendence of rulers necessarily do so, for some of the worst acts in history have been committed by people under it; which is true. But does not this prove, that the mere personal convictions, whether of rulers or people, are so uncertain a foundation to rest on, that something else is required for their safety, which can be nothing else than the existence in them of the true faith of the relation, and of the grace and affections resulting

therefrom? Individual conscientiousness is of incalculable value, but it has not given to it the competency to keep a man. The whole economy of the Church and of human nature, is opposed to the possibility of men being exhibited as self-preservers; for even with good intentions they will be misled by individual biases and peculiar defects, which require a superintending power to correct them, and this the Church government furnishes.

To object to the people having a decisive power to refuse a presentee on the security of their own convictions, has been treated in this controversy as a great affront to them; but surely upon insufficient grounds. Men are not delivered from liability to temptation and the power of sin, when they become communicants in Churches. On the contrary, they are then exposed to temptation to the greatest sins, for the sins of men in such a position assume a deeper die, and are of a more deceitful nature, than those of others. The worst forms of sin, as we learn both from Scripture and experience, are developed in the Church, and far more in a zealous, than in a lukewarm condition of it. Is it not possible, that self-righteousness, judgment, and selfishness, may cover themselves with the cloak of piety? Is there not a real danger of this in every Church? The self-deception of men is among the most trite topics of moralists. The interest of men in eternal salvation, and consequent desire for it, prove altogether insufficient to make them willing to submit to the conditions of obtaining it. The "evil heart of unbelief," seconded by the present attractions of sense, or by more powerful deceptions within, are too often more than a match for this which might seem an overwhelming motive of action\*. The orthodox doctrine of the Church of Scotland is, that

\* See the sentiments of a divine of the days of Melville:

"Lord, with what care thou hast begirt us round!

Parents first season us; then schoolmasters

Deliver us to laws; they send us bound

To rules of reason, holy messengers,

Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,

Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,

Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,

Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,

Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,

The sound of glory ringing in our ears;

Without, our shame: within, our consciences;

Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears!

Yet all these fences, and their whole array,  
One cunning *bosom sin* blows quite away."

HERBERT.

men naturally are utterly corrupt and prone to transgression, an easy prey to the ceaseless snares of Satan, both weak to discern their own condition, and willing to be deceived in regard to it. Communicants are not raised above this common nature of man, and the occasion of the appointment of a new pastor is one of peculiar temptation to them, both from without and from within. They therefore require all the safeguards that have been provided for the Church, and when left undefended by the ordinances appointed for the purpose, they will be in extreme danger. Under the Veto law they are undefended, because Church rule and Church obedience can be effectual to produce benefit only by faith in the office, and therefore if the clergy renounce the exercise of their office in this particular matter, and get the people to believe it not then to exist, it must practically become a non-existence. Surely this may be objected to, without any distrust or disrespect towards the people, nay from the warmest regard to them; for if this wide door, leading into the very heart of the fold, be not only left open, but purposely left unguarded by the shepherds, can it be doubted that the wolf will enter by it? Is it possible to suppose, that the people of Scotland, were they many times better than they are, will be safe without the ordinance, provided by the Chief Shepherd for the very end of protecting his flocks?

It has already been observed, that the place of the people does not warrant the exercise by them of control over the constitution of the function of rule; but as, in guarding against an encroachment on their part, the danger may be incurred of encroachment on individual conscience, by the elevation of the clergy into a place corresponding to what has been developed in the Romish Church; and as this danger, which is always a real one, has, in this controversy, been converted into certainty of the evil, and many are influenced by the belief, that there is no alternative between prostration of conscience and the licence of the non-intrusion principle, it is proper that this part of the question should be minutely examined.

The choice of a minister is said to be the business of the people. This is not their business. The affairs of a man's own family are his business; the regulation of his individual thoughts, habits and actions, is his business;—but the choice of a minister is not the business of any individual, or collective number of individuals. It is the business of the Church, according to the organs and functions by which she acts, and the people have a part there-

in, and it belongs to the business of individuals to perform that part.

Now, in regard to what is his proper business, a man is, and must ever remain, perfectly independent and responsible. That portion of the spiritual life of the whole Church, which is in him, reveals itself in his conscience, and this must be his sole guide of action. The resources for strengthening and enlightening his conscience, however, are not confined to himself. Manifold aids are provided, of which the Church is the chief. Still, all light that comes from this or any other quarter, must demonstrate its value in the conscience of the individual, otherwise, whatever it may have to others, it can have none to him. One who truly seeks light from the Church will never fail to find it, sooner or later, though often, it may be, in a form different from his expectations. But until it comes, he must just wait. It is a good test of a sound-principled man, that he will not be in haste to judge and reject what he hears from his spiritual guides, and will remain patient. If he is a bad man, and will reject the light, or what is worse, will keep his spirit in such a posture, through self-sufficiency, that light cannot reach him, he will ultimately be ejected from that Church, the benefits of which he has despised. But the reality of the Church, and of the faith of individuals, as parts of a great whole, framed by a divine hand to suit each other, will be proved by this, that the Church rulers rightly standing in their offices will give, and the individuals rightly keeping their places will receive, light and strength, and the unity and strength of the whole will obviously increase. But I repeat, that all this must exist in, and be measured by, the condition of the consciences of individuals, according to their several concerns and places in it.

The Church of Scotland is of course regarded by her members as a branch of the true Church Catholic, and there is salvation and spiritual blessings within her for them. This being so, the mutual action and reaction that have been mentioned, will take place between her and her members. If a member shall, by his private judgment, not simply preserve the independence of his own conscience, but shall displace his minister, he to that extent displaces the Church ; and if he holds that Presbyteries, Synods and General Assembly, have not grace to protect him, he, according to the extent and intensity of such conviction, displaces the whole Church, and makes it to him a nonentity, and stands alone. It is

not easy to conceive, that any man's conscience, or private responsibility, can ever require or warrant him to do this.

Private men have little to do with judging evil in their rulers. Not that they are to cease for a moment from clearly discerning the difference between good and evil, whenever it comes under their notice, and especially when it comes in the shape of authoritative instruction or direction. Their responsibility by conscience obliges them to do this. But their constituting themselves in spirit the judges of their rulers, is a totally different thing. If they find something they hear to be neither food nor medicine, and fear it is poison, let them by all means reject it, and do with what they have besides. This satisfies their private responsibility in this respect; and it will ordinarily cause no schism in the Church, provided the individual's act is done with the quietness that becomes his place. But if the matter be essential, and is brought as such before the minister, and if the minister and his superiors decide that he is right, and the individual wrong, the individual's responsibility leaves it on him to determine what course he shall take for himself; but it cannot give him any right to subject the judgment of the Church to his opinion. And in general, it may be said, that true independence extends to a man's judgment and conscience universally, and to his actions, in so far as they relate to his own private place, and do not encroach on the rights of others; and that his individual responsibility requires him to act his private part well. But neither independence nor responsibility require, that a man's private judgment in a matter that relates to a public office, having reference to the whole system of which he is a part, should have an absolute effect upon the constitution of such office. This, from the nature of the thing, must be under the power of the Church rulers. If as to this, or any other ecclesiastical matter, Church members feel aggrieved by a minister or presbytery, they, if necessary, may appeal for protection to the higher Church judicatories. If the Church is in a right condition, redress will in the main be thus obtained. If not, and if the evil which prevents it be not partial but radical, then that Church has fallen.

When an individual apprehends this to be the condition of things, or if from a partial cause he finds himself substantially in the same condition as if it was, a heavy and actual responsibility rests on him, to determine what he shall do; but the weight of that responsibility does not lie so much in his resolving to remain in the Church, as in his resolving to leave it. In a perfect state of the Church,

schism is death. “ They went out from us, because they were not of us ; if they had been of us, they surely would have continued with us ;” the spirit of which statement of John, though perhaps without sufficient regard to the changed condition of the Church, constantly actuated the Reformers. Still, I do not say but that separation may, in some circumstances, be justifiable, or at least pardonable ; but it is the last thing a right-hearted man will contemplate, and the better Christian he is, and the higher the estimate he has formed of the nature of the Church, the more reluctant will he be to execute such a resolution. If he should resolve to remain, and take his lot with the Church through evil and good, in hopes of her recovery, and with the care to preserve his personal conscience undefiled, such a man, whether or not he shall be gratified with the fulfilment of his desires as to the Church, will himself be in no danger, and will have earned all honour, as having the true heart of a right Christian man.

In all these various positions of individuals, their personal conscientiousness, and the demands of their private responsibility, are fully satisfied, and consequently their private duties are discharged. But if the whole or many members so act, they will assuredly preserve and strengthen the Church. It were infidelity to disbelieve this. No defective organization, no worldly bondages, can have power to prevent it. The Church of Scotland, comparing its present condition with what it was twenty years ago, is amazed at the change that has been produced in the spirit of her ministers, without any external cause, and under the influence of the same external hindrances as before existed. Without undervaluing on the character of the change, farther than to observe, (remembering that I speak as unto wise men,) that the bearing by the majority of their honours somewhat more meekly, and the ceasing to proclaim their spiritual superiority over certain brethren, with whom they are given (not wisely) to compare themselves, would afford reason for a more satisfactory inference as to the entire wholesomeness of it,—there is no doubt of its existence ; and the fact shows, what hundreds of others might be adduced to substantiate, how independent of outward circumstances are the hidden operations in the spirit of man, and how easy it must be for the Head of the Church, in spite of them, to reward the faith of His people in any way He sees good.

These considerations will enable us to estimate, what is the danger of the subjection of conscience under Popish bondage, unless

the non-intrusion principle shall be enforced, on the demand of the right of private judgment, and of responsibility for individual salvation.

This evil consists of the extinction of individual conscience and private responsibility, and the substitution for them of blind obedience to the priesthood, and blind reliance on the offices of the Church. It does not consist in the reverence of the people for the clergy, and their holding their place and prerogatives sacred: and on the contrary, because this is a good spirit, and the principles of the Church do not enjoin the corruption, but assume the reverse, there are doubtless many good Christians in the communion of Rome. But in the practical condition of that Church, arising from a great many exciting causes, this corruption does exist, and has always been its tendency: and at the Reformation it had attained such a height, as to produce the revulsion of feeling, which caused that event. There can be nothing of this state of mind in what has been described. The inviolability of individual conscience is held an essential principle: and as long as conscience remains thus respected, its prostration before the priesthood is impossible.

If the above representation be correct, there remains nothing in the acts of the Church rulers, for private judgment and responsibility for individual salvation to work upon. Let private judgment exercise itself to the full, in the regulation of private concerns, the enlargement of faith and knowledge, and the rectification of inward principles. But, as to the Church, in the first instance, a man's individual responsibility requires him to receive her with faith and obedience, as she stands constituted. And if he regards that responsibility, he will remember Uzzah, and not put forth his hand to touch, what it is not his commission even to save from falling. His strength lies wholly in his own place, and there by reflex operation it is great, even for strengthening the Church. In fact, readiness in a man to forsake the Church, to which he has been joined, because of displeasure at the act of the patron or Presbytery, may betray him into that way of saving his life, by which he shall lose it. What is the state of matters, when a real necessity exists for separation, has already been noticed; but in such circumstances, the remedy is not *within*, but *without* the Church, for it supposes the Church to have fallen.

It is said in one of the Non-intrusion tracts, that "every thing contained in the Word of God bearing upon the settlement of

ministers, the rights of conscience and of private judgment, the responsibilities and obligations of men, contributes to establish the great truth, that the Christian people, that is, those who are duly and regularly admitted to the privileges of church membership, should, *at the very least*, have full liberty to give or withhold their consent to the settlement of a minister among them, and by so doing to secure or prevent his admission as their pastor." The founding, as is here as well as commonly done in this controversy, upon the rights of conscience and of private judgment, and the responsibilities and obligations of men, of the absolute power in question, would at once destroy all government.

In the published speech of an eminent clergyman, accordingly, he says as much in these words—"The great Protestant principle, as to the proper nature, the legitimate extent, and the limits of Church authority," is that it is "limited by the Word of God, and that from every act of that authority, *an appeal lies on the part of every private member of the Church*, first, to the Word of God, as the mutual standard of appeal; and, secondly, to God, the Judge of all." When did the General Assembly ever sustain such an appeal as this, in the face of its own judgment, that the party was in the wrong? Would they suspend the execution of their judgment, till such an appeal was disposed of,—in other words, admit they had no power of judgment at all? The Civil Courts are limited in their powers of judgment by the statute and common law of the land, as much as the Church by the Word of God,—but would they listen to a party who appealed from their judgment to that law, gravely telling them that in his conviction they had put a wrong construction upon it? Whether the decision of a Church Court binds the private conscience to *approve* of it, and anticipates the result of the *great* day of judgment, is a totally different question, which has nothing to do with the practical question in hand.

Observe how the matter is stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith. "God alone is Lord of the conscience," and, the article adds, "the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also." All this is most just, but it does not refer to the exercise of government. It expresses the rule which must ever govern a man's individual state of mind, and no authority or ordinance can be substituted to relieve him from the responsibility it imposes. The implicit faith and blind obedience condemned, being the form

of corruption of the Romish Church, overthrow a man's responsibility in this the peculiar sphere of it. But to prevent the abuse of the doctrine of individual liberty, and to point out its true limits, the Confession, in the same chapter, adds, “ and because *the powers which God has ordained*, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another ; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God.” And the lawfulness of visiting those who publish opinions of this description, both with Church censures and civil punishments, is then asserted. Here the supremacy of rule in its own place is maintained, as explicitly as the rights of private conscience had been. Is there, therefore, a contradiction, so that the one passage destroys the other, and no intelligible rule of action is given ? Or,—which comes to the same thing,—is the lawfulness of the power, or the lawfulness of its exercise, left to the judgment of its subjects, so that their obligation to obey, is after all, measured by their own opinion of the act of the ruler, which is subjected to their individual consciences, as a court of appeal against it ? Is it possible to conceive, that the Westminster Divines intended to place the power of rulers on a foundation of sand like this, and that their work, which is distinguished for the gravity and solidity of its matter, should contain on this important subject a tissue of contradictions \* ?

\* We have in the terms of the Westminster Confession as to this matter, another instance of the inferior simplicity and spirituality of the Church of that time, to what it was at the commencement of the Reformation. The Second Book of Discipline says, that “ some are appointed to be rulers, and the rest of the members thereof to be ruled and obey, according to the Word of God, and inspiration of his Spirit, always under One Head and Chief Governor, Jesus Christ,” thus involving, in the very description of the standing of the Church, the high principles which must govern both rulers and ruled, and assuming her existence in this state. The Confession, as we see, states the ruler's “ lawful power,” and “ the lawful exercise of it,” as being as it were a qualification of its exercise. They both mean the same thing, only in the one it is expressed in the form of faith, and in the other, in that of law. Neither could possibly mean, that the exercise of power was to depend on the private judgment of the subject, as to its lawfulness. The object of the reference to the ground and nature of rule was, 1. to be a direction to the ruler as to the principles by which he was bound to govern himself ; and, 2. a warning to him, that if he acted in defiance of those principles, so as to destroy the benefit of rule to the subjects, the system would fall to pieces ; for as certainly as disease in the animal frame is incipient death, requiring only increase of degree to be consummated, so does a failure in the faith and duties of their places, in either rulers or ruled, involve the active principle of the dissolution of the social system.

The reconciliation of the obligation to obey lawful authority, with the imperfections of rulers in their exercise of it, is to be found in the separate provinces of the ruler and of individuals, as has been already explained. The acts or decrees of the ruler impose no obligation on those under rule to approve of them. They retain their own judgments in their own province. But neither are they entitled to judge the ruler's act, and still less to control or resist it, provided he has not left his place, and encroached on that of the individual.

"I should imagine," says Dr Chalmers, (in an argument to show that the Church Courts and people ought to be trusted to do their duty under the operation of the Veto law, but which much more goes to show that that law should never have been passed,) "that all legislation proceeds on the idea, that some men are to be trusted; rather than on the idea, to which the Psalmist gave rash and hasty utterance, that 'all men are liars.' The truth is, that were it not for an ultimate confidence in man resting and terminating somewhere, legislation were impossible. And, accordingly, there is such confidence placed in juries and judges; or, if it be a business which admits of appeal, the confidence may be transferred for a few steps, but must find at length a landing place, in the integrity of some ultimate court,—often in the integrity of a single individual, as that of the Lord Chancellor of England. The truth is, that, if, so long as there is a risk of dishonesty, cases are to be transferred from one body to another,—this at each step is but a shifting of the difficulty; and as, wherever there are human beings, there is this risk of dishonesty, there behoved to be shifting *ad infinitum*, and so as to banish all legislation out of the world. In every act of legislation, there must be an implied presumption, that judges and administrators will do their duty."

The principle, that it is lawful to destroy or limit a power by the private conscience and responsibility of those subject to it, would make the Veto law inconsistent with itself. It is the very nature of conscience to be peculiar and individual. It cannot be constrained by authority; but as little can it be satisfied by majorities. If the existence of an alleged scruple of conscience, or regard for individual interest, in the subjects of an ordinance, deprive it of its power, for what reason can the same grounds expressed by a minority, or even by one, be disregarded? The Church can be justified in forcing conscience, or doing injustice,

in regard to one, as little as many ; and therefore, in right principle, the veto of a majority should be converted into the *Liberum Veto*, which was competent to every single member of the diet of the unhappy kingdom of Poland, which did not fall a prey to force from without, until she had betrayed her helplessness, from the want of internal principles of unity. The usual answer, that the only practical course in such cases is to deal with majorities, leaves the evil where it was, and confesses a manifest compromise of principle, which in its effects is the reverse of what it is often mistaken for, and what is one of the golden rules of wisdom,—a compromise of action.

But, as was observed in the outset, the principle under consideration will equally evacuate the power of rule in every case, where an individual who is accused, does not plead guilty, but justifies his act or opinion. The principle assumes, that the approbation, or at least the absence of the disapprobation, on moral and spiritual grounds, by the subjects of rule, of the judgment which they are called on to obey, is required to make the judgment binding. The place and authority of the rulers, as in themselves authoritative, go for nothing. On what ground, then, can any man be dealt with as an offender, if he shall justify himself, except that of mere arbitrary assertion by an authority, which has disabled itself from an authoritative act ? The Strathbogie ministers allege conscience, as the justification of their resistance to the General Assembly :—On the principle in question, they ought to be excused. Certain Voluntaries allege, that their consciences are wounded by the appropriation of their money to the support of the Established Church :—The Church ought to pray the Legislature to exempt them from the burden. There is in fact no objection to established things, no enthusiastic imagination as to natural rights, and even hardly any delinquency, which might not find shelter under such a principle. It is on this account, that the Confession of Faith so emphatically condemns it. The limiting of the power of dissent to the male heads of families, and binding the parish by their judgment, on account of their possessing a natural headship over the rest, is itself in direct opposition to it \*.

\* The representation of the parish by the heads of families seems of some standing in the Church of Scotland. It is mentioned in a set of regulations intended to govern the practice of the Church under the act 1690, which are quoted with much approbation in Dr Welsh's evidence before the Patronage Committee. They were first drawn up and printed in 1696, then by appointment of the Assembly transmitted to Presby-

These remarks apply to the derivation of the people's absolute power of veto, from the rights of conscience and individual responsibility. The answer to the claim is, that these, in regard either to majority or minority, are not concerned in the act of the Church authority, on which alone, if the people have previously done their duty, the responsibility for the act rests. Putting aside this ground, the claim can rest only on the assertion, that it is justified by the law of the Church, which requires the consent of the people, and that it is fitting and expedient that they should have the power in question. To this view of the case, the answers, upon the grounds already stated, are, 1. that the principles of the Church exclude such an absolute power on the part of the people; 2. that the consent and will mentioned in the law, refer to these as they exist under the relations which the people hold to their rulers, and suppose the Church acting harmoniously in those relations; and, 3. that no expediency can warrant the infringement of essential principles.

I am aware, however, how much feeling prevails over reasonings in a question of this kind, and how difficult it is to persuade men, that, in the formation of a relation, which is of the closest description, and which requires the consent of both parties, any power whatever can be permitted to control the will of one of them; and the case of marriage is commonly referred to, as aptly illustrating the objection. At the risk of repetition, I shall apply the principles already stated, to this view of the question.

1. Marriage is an act wholly within the private sphere of individuals, and, being in itself lawful and honourable, the Church rulers have no power to control private parties in regard to it, whatever powers they may have to deal with them in reference to tories, then revised by several committees, but they were never finally passed; yet it is said in the advertisement quoted by the Doctor, they "no doubt will have weight with many, as having come through the hands of so many learned, judicious, grave and pious ministers, who have been at great pains in that matter." Considering the form in which the rights of the people are maintained in our days, it will hardly be thought possible, that one of the rules should be expressed thus: "Though a plurality of heritors and elders *will always be thought* to be the voice of the meeting, and *in law and reason* is so counted, yet it is most desirable to have the universal consent of the heads of families, and this ought to be endeavoured." Careful injunctions are at the same time given as to tenderness of dealing with all; and the overture affords an excellent example, according to the actual circumstances of the time, of the mode of giving just satisfaction to the people, while retaining them in their true place, instead of making the impracticable attempt to do so, by throwing the matter upon their uncontrolled will.

their state of mind generally. But what is of chief importance to notice is, that there is no question of government involved, prior to, and in the act of, contracting this relation. The woman, both in the act itself, and before it, is perfectly free and independent. Here the analogy completely fails. A destitute church is not free and independent, but is under the spiritual rule of the Presbytery, from whom it is under obligation to receive a pastor; and, from the nature of spiritual government, it is subject to rule in the act of receiving one, because it cannot hold any rights which would be subversive of government. Hence, 1. the people's will cannot *per se* have an absolute effect, 2. the Presbytery are bound, as far as possible, to know the spiritual state of the people in regard to the presentee, and 3. if the Presbytery were to reject a presentee, because of a dissent by the people originating in a state of mind which is corrupt or wrongful, the act would be one of pure iniquity, landing directly on the Presbytery, who are responsible for it. The Church herself has recognised the principle now stated, by holding herself entitled to induct a pastor, without consent, over a people under discipline; but the distinction is arbitrary, and such a limitation of her powers would be inconsistent with the fulfilment of her duty. The First Book of Discipline, as we have seen, supposes the people put under censure, for refusing to consent.

2. As an absolute right in the people to prevent a settlement, would destroy the power of rule in the Church, the people are bound in conscience, so long as they are members, to acquiesce in the judgment of the rulers, even though it amounts to intrusion. Of course, they are entitled, and bound, to take all lawful means for making the rulers aware of their objections, and of the nature of the act they threaten to commit. If, on the other hand, the rulers, for the sake of peace, resolve to acquiesce in the decision of the people, without inquiry, they will purchase only a temporary ease, because the principle so recognised must enlarge itself, and extend its encroachments.

3. The powers of the Presbytery admit of the utmost scope for dissent, for if satisfied that a dissent is honest and innocent, not resting on feelings that tend to disorganize the Church, nor calculated to frustrate any beneficial objects they contemplate towards the people, it ought to be held justified, without being subject to the mere opinion by the Presbytery of the ground of objection, as an absolute criterion;—but, at the same time, from the danger to

which this class of objections exposes the function of government, there is none that requires more strict observation.

4. Before the repugnance, which the very name of intrusion excites, is given way to, the state of things which it contemplates should be carefully scrutinized. In a church, where rulers and people are both in a right condition, intrusion is impossible. It happens, where the people, being in a right state of mind, and perfectly recognising their obligation of obedience, dissent from the presentee on good grounds, which the rulers nevertheless disregard. Right-thinking men are indignant at such an evil as this, and are apt to be impatient at its being supposed there is no remedy for it. The absolute veto of the people is certainly not the remedy, because it would destroy the power of rulers altogether; nor, apart from the Church judicatures, is there any within the Church, except faith and patience. But the term is in danger of being applied to a very different state of things, where, it being assumed that the people are entitled to an absolute veto, and the will of the people, thus devoid of the blessing of government, and the grace of obedience, becoming, what it inevitably will become in such circumstances, jealous, presumptuous, arrogant, and encroaching, every act of authority which does not soothe, but which irritates, this condition of mind, will be so designated.

5. According to the right operation of the faith of the members of the Church, there is no compulsion placed upon their wills, by the judgment of the Church rulers, even when they cannot approve of it. They may remonstrate against it, they may grieve on account of it; but, when it is pronounced, they submit to it by an act of duty and necessity; and, in this attitude, they will not lose any of the benefits which the relation is fitted to bestow, and be most likely to be saved from the evils, which they have apprehended.

Nothing is farther from my intention, than to underrate the evil of the intrusion of unfaithful pastors. When it occurs, nothing can be more afflicting to a feeling heart, or more disastrous to the people who suffer from it. But looking at the matter practically, and putting aside the exaggerations of party, some deductions must be made from the cases of intrusion of an absolutely unbearable kind, which are alleged to have taken place. Indeed, were the principle of the Veto law the only standard for ascertaining what can be so described, and if it were true that the contest on

the part of the people, was for the establishment of the power which that principle concedes to them, this would furnish the best of all apologies for the intrusions by the dominant party during last century. This, I believe, however, will afford only a partial excuse for those proceedings. The circumstances were singular ; and it appears well worthy the study of philosophers, as well as divines, how it was that the educated and learned Protestants of that time, not in this country only, but every where, came into a state so different from what might have been expected in the descendants of the Reformers ; and that Church principles became infected and degraded by a shallow and worldly philosophy of fatalism, inculcating principles of mere utility and expediency, which covered, as with an overblowing of sand, the fair fields which the Reformers had regained and cultivated. The widespread cause should prevent the tone of personal rancour, which so much prevails in allusions to the Church rulers of those days. This, and studied comparisons to the advantage of the present Church, and representations of the people as being invariably the innocent victims, must excite unsafe states of feeling in both rulers and people. If the soil, again recovered, bore nothing better than what is now explained to be the non-intrusion principle, and such fruits as these, the conclusion would be inevitable, that its qualities have received irreparable injury. A common confession of the sins and shortcomings of ourselves, our fathers and our brethren, would be a more profitable exercise. All have need of this. The Moderate party adulterated the truth, and were guilty of abuse of power ; but their opponents are subverting principles, threatening even worse evils.

It may be asked if, then, it is meant, that there is no remedy for an abuse of power by the Church rulers, and that the people must rest content, whatever their rulers choose to appoint ? One answer has been already made, that if the people are truly faithful in their own places, there is no fear but that there will be a remedy of the right sort, by the removal of the evil. The direct answer is, that to suppose a system to confer a power on the persons, whose place is that of subjection, to rise out of that place, and control the rulers, is a contradiction. This is revolution, and not a question of constitution. It is a case not of law, but of force. It is a case of extremity, where the system of government, through some essential vice, has decayed and fallen to pieces. There is

no analogy between such a case, and that of the operation of a regular function of the system. A provision of such a nature would realise what Burke complained of in the sentiments of the innovators of his day, that they “ were for converting the extreme medicine of the State into its daily bread.” What will justify this extremity, or what may be held sufficiently to provoke it, or what is the result likely to flow from it, it is unnecessary to consider, for this inquiry relates only to the constitutional rights of the people, under the principles of the Church of Scotland. Such a position of things, in the analogous system of the State, is thus described in the searching words of Burke ;—it becomes, he says, “ an extraordinary question of State, and wholly out of the law ; a question (like all other questions of State) of dispositions, and of means, and of probable consequences, rather than of positive rights. As it was not made for common abuses, so it is not to be agitated by common minds. The superlative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin, is faint, obscure, and not easily definable. It is not a single act, nor a single event, which determines it. Governments must be abused and deranged indeed, before it can be thought of ; and the prospects of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past. When things are in that lamentable condition, the nature of the disease is to indicate the remedy to those, whom nature has qualified to administer in extremities this critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a distempered State. Times, and occasions, and provocations, will teach their own lessons. The wise will determine from the gravity of the case ; the irritable from sensibility to oppression ; the high-minded from disdain and indignation at abusive power in unworthy hands ; the brave and bold from the love of honourable danger in a generous cause : but, with or without right, a revolution will be the very last resource of the thinking and the good.”

The essential feature of the condition of things so described, is simply that the persons under rule subject to their control the exercise of rule. When this is begun to be done, its necessary tendency is to advance, and as the non-intrusion principle unequivocally makes a commencement, it is certain it will not stop. The British constitution has been referred to as warranting a different conclusion, but without justice. The government of this country stands in the Crown, and the subordinate authorities appointed by it, and the people have no constitutional right of con-

trolling it. It is true that, in legislation, the Nobles and Commons are conjoined with the Crown, and that the constitution provides means for the Executive being made aware of the wants and wishes of the people, and that practically it must in a considerable degree conform its acts to their state of mind. So it must be in every government, for, after all, rulers are only organs of a body, not separate, and independent of it. But it is a very different thing for rulers to consult the state of mind of the subjects, and temper their rule to it, and for them to enact, as a fundamental law of their place, that their acts shall be subject to it, or for the subjects to hold that their wills are the controller of their rulers. All government stands by faith, and, imperfect and interrupted as this may be in fact, there must be enough of it, substantially and on the whole, to leave the powers of government with the rulers, otherwise the government will be dissolved ; as was witnessed in France, where, from the extinction of this natural faith in the people, the ancient system of government crumbled to pieces, with hardly the power of resistance. Looking at the matter as a mere question of strength and physical power, the subjects of rule always have it in their power to destroy it ; but this, instead of proving the subjection of power to their will, would be a most unconstitutional and illegal act, and the state of mind which should prompt it, would be in the highest degree infidel and wicked. A wrong impression has been gaining on men's minds of late years, on this subject, as if the House of Commons, because it may use its powers to paralyse the functions of the Government, were really the rulers, and the constitution were a democracy under the external forms of a monarchy ; which error affords the only analogy in the British constitution, in support of the non-intrusion principle. If this shall advance and be established, the constitution will be broken up ; and, in the meantime, as is confessed by seriously-thinking men, and by none was it more than by the generality of the ministers of the Church of Scotland, previously to the excitement of their minds in this controversy, the operation of the wrong principle is showing itself, in the weakness of the Government, and the disunion of the country. No merely human system has perfection, but the Church, having a perfect standard, can aim at nothing short of it. But, though she cannot regulate her principles by earthly models, she may learn, in their operation, important illustrations of the principles, which are common to all systems. If palpable evil is proceeding from an un-

wholesome kind of control by the people, in the working of the machine of political government, while the essential parts are admitted to be out of their reach, what can be expected, when the ministry, who in the Church of Scotland, in conjunction with elders taken from the people, hold at once the executive, the legislative and the judicial functions, are subjected to the authoritative control of the people, in the constitution of the office in every successive holder of it ? There may be practical difficulties in fixing the point of separation between the places and rights of rulers and subjects in the abstract, and in practice, from the imperfection of human instruments, there may be an intermingling of them, which cannot be reconciled to strict principles ; but the rule adopted in the Church of Scotland, carries this to an extent far beyond the example even of any earthly system.

A like misuse is made of the examples of the Reformation and the Revolution, which are beneficial, or the reverse, as examples giving men principles of judgment, just according to the light in which they are regarded. When they are considered as establishing the right of the people to rise up against their rulers, when it pleases them so to do, or as having placed the power of rulers merely on the footing of expediency and utility, or subject to the people, the effect is most baneful ; but when they are considered as altogether unavoidable and providential operations, by which systems that had become corrupted and unfit for their ends were removed, and place made for a change, in which the true principles of unity were again manifested, with right to undiminished reverence, they become blessings to be enjoyed with thankfulness and a good conscience \*.

A difficulty may be felt in accounting for the position of Dissenters, in reference to these views. It is anomalous, because the condition of the Church is so. In the place of the Church Catholic which Dissenters have occupied, there have been many good men among them ; but it by no means follows that this would continue, were their principles universal. In the condition of imperfection and incompleteness, in which the Church has been, it

\* The first of these views too much prevails among politicians in our day ; the second may be found illustrated as to the Revolution, with the views of a statesman and philosopher, in Burke's Letter on the French Revolution, and with those of a divine, in Maurice's " Church of Christ," where he contends against the views of the Oxford divines, who hold a third form of sentiment on the subject, that absolute passivity was the duty of the subjects.

has been a sort of necessity to have a body of Dissenters, where there might be play for greater individual freedom, such as will always exhibit itself, where minds are vigorously moved by the truths of Christianity, with more or less of the irregularity and indulgence of self-will, which often accompanies that state of mind. But what, in an imperfect state of things, is permissible, or even useful, for freedom and the purposes of safety, would be positively injurious, were the whole system framed in conformity with it. What has made such a position as that of the Dissenters possible, and prevented them from falling under the natural tendencies of their condition, has been the derivative effects of rule, as firmly existing in the State, and hitherto in the Established Churches. Society, whether spiritual or civil, cannot stand except by virtue of the fundamental principles on which it depends, of which rule, with its counterpart of willing recognition and obedience, is one. But when once fairly fixed, there may exist many subordinate combinations of men within the system, who may carry on their particular objects, with more or less of exemption in form from the original principle, and yet not experience the evil in a fatal degree ; nay who may confer a positive benefit, by allowing scope for the excess and irregularities of individual energy or feeling ; while, by a reflective influence, they derive benefit from the more stable order of things, of which they are a part, and to which they are firmly united in other respects. On this principle, in the Church, the power of free and uncontrolled election was given to the people at large to the office of deacon, which is essentially different from the office of presbyter or spiritual ruler, but has in it rule of its own kind. Hence, in the State, the free election of representatives to Parliament, with the utmost safety and with great advantage to a nation, if the people will not think that this is a mode, by which they can disguisedly take the power of rule to themselves ; and hence also, the numerous instances of corporations and lesser associations of society, in which popular sway largely prevails. In these instances, which are those of the operation, in a natural and wholesome manner, of the principle described, a tone and standard of order and regularity are derived from the undoubted authority, established in the fixed and comprehensive institutions of Church and State, which act as the attractive power to prevent the repulsive force within themselves, from hurrying them into disunion, and separation from the harmonies of the system. But while I account thus for the stability of dissenting bodies, notwithstanding

of the insufficient provision of rule in their constitutions, I have no doubt that this want has been productive of considerable injury to them. Let the Established Church have the will of the people as its judge and controller, and let her ministers and the Dissenters be set to compete with one another for their favour, and extreme corruption will enter into both, and necessarily communicate itself to the State.

Having endeavoured to show, that the necessary subjection of the people to their spiritual rulers in the act of receiving a pastor, is not derogatory to them,—is the result of their position,—is yet consistent with the possession by them of substantial right in the matter,—and could not be taken away without the destruction of the blessing of the relation, and the dissolution of the Church,—and that the people are not competent to resist the injurious effects, which the abolition of this subjection would produce on them, while yet they retain unimpaired the rights of private conscience and individual responsibility,—I proceed to notice, the direct injuries which the principle of Non-Intrusion, by subverting this subjection, must inflict on the people; but these have already been so much anticipated, that they will need only a brief consideration.

In the early part of these remarks, the grounds were stated for the conclusions, 1. That the non-intrusion principle, when understood as an absolute bar controlling the acts of the Presbytery, formally excludes the people from the protection of their spiritual rulers on a most important occasion, 2. That the right of private judgment, in the sense in which it is maintained to warrant this result, is subversive of all government whatsoever, 3. That the distinction between a people under and not under discipline, has no application, because the people are at all times under the spiritual charge of their rulers, and the rulers have no power ever to emancipate them from it, or to make distinctions, when it is essential, and when not, and, 4. That the positions, that the law has flowed from the Church rulers, and that it is they, and not the people, who judge, adopting, however, the dissent as their reason, without right to question it, imply that the Church has power over the essential principles of her constitution, and can change them at her will. The intermediate inquiry has established more clearly the force of these objections.

But higher ground may now be taken. The evil, which, though

least observed, is the greatest, arises from the effect which the law must produce on the principle of faith, that the ministry hold the place of rule, and the people that of subjection, which relation, and the faith and affections corresponding, being the condition of unity to the Church, bring her members into the posture essential for their receiving the chief blessing of their places. Vague and contradictory impressions exist, that government is derogatory to the people, or that they are conjoined in it, both of which go to destroy it. The salvation of the souls of the members of the Church, is regarded as the end of her constitution, and every thing that does not palpably minister to this is undervalued, and every thing that seems to interfere with the wills of those, who are the subjects of so great a work, suspected and discredited; whereas it is the manifestation of the Creator, that is the end of the Church, to which the salvation of the souls of individuals is merely a means,—no doubt, an inseparable and most blessed means,—and which end requires the uniting of the Church together by ordinances, whose power and grace stand in the Head, whence, and whence alone, consequently, can full blessing result to the individuals. True, there may exist spiritual life, with little exhibition of the higher ends of the Church; and, under the impression that mere salvation, that is, the reception of spiritual life, is the end, it is not uncommon to find texts rested in, in which this elemental principle of life is alone set forth, as if a Church could be established on such texts. A definition includes only the lowest form of what is defined. Alexander Selkirk, in his desert island, had natural life, and so has a man under the helplessness of disease, and even during suspended animation; but would a definition of life, on the level which such cases exhibit, give any idea of the manifold blessings and uses of social and corporeal life and health? A hypochondriac, full of thoughts about his health, has little of the reality, and less of the enjoyment of it. Is spiritual life therefore nothing? It is all but every thing. It is what the sap is to the tree, and the blood to the living animal, without which the organised framework would be a lifeless trunk and a dead carcase. But what are the sap and blood by themselves? Valueless apart from the framework, they by the necessity of their nature demonstrate their true vital properties, by producing by means of assimilation that very organization, which is the condition of their own effective existence and manifestation. So, it is the healthful product of true faith, to exhibit itself in the Church by means of ordinances, which are

the channels and organs of the Church, both for preserving herself and her members, and for making her effective externally; and the spiritual life, which we have in her, is rendered vigorous and sure, by its occupation towards the ends for which it was given, according to the duties and relations of the order of government and obedience,—“the people,” as the closing passage of the Second Book of Discipline declares, “suffering themselves to be ruled according thereto, the princes and magistrates not being exeeemed, and those that are placed in the ecclesiastical estate rightly ruling and governing,” whereby the amazing ends set forth in that passage shall be attained.

Now, the non-intrusion principle tends to destroy the faith of the people in the existence of ordinances. It gives them authoritative concern in the origination of those ordinances. In their act, so far as it goes, they are irresponsible except to God, in the constitution of the government of Christ over themselves, and as their power, though not sole, is supreme in its nature, it makes them conjunct, or rather preliminary, judges of, and so above the presentees, as a condition of their obtaining the office, in which, nevertheless, the people are required to have faith, as the ordinances of Christ over them. These principles are destructive of each other. And as the law requires the people to receive it as a fundamental principle of the Church, that the constitution of the ordinance is dependent on their supreme will, not only may an evil will in them be saved from judgment by its operation, but necessarily, if they act in the spirit of it, it will tend to make their will evil, by rendering it superior, instead of subject, to the ordinance of Christ. They can be safe, only while they resist the spirit of the law. This is not in accordance with the principles of the Church of Scotland, for, after the Church had been thrown down at the Reformation, by circumstances which by the faithful men of that day were held to render the event inevitable, and when its reconstitution was cast, by like necessity, upon those who had been raised up for that end, we have seen that when once the ministry had, by common consent, been established, it was regarded as placed over the people in such a manner, that they never afterwards could become independent of, or on a level with it. The First Book of Discipline, perhaps not unnaturally, considering the period and circumstances in which it was written, looked towards the people as having a limited and strictly guarded initiative; but this was altered on mature deliberation in the Second

Book of Discipline, the general principles of which, in regard to the necessity, uses and nature of rule and obedience in the Church, are admirable, and full of profound wisdom.

Whatever affects rule in its origination, must qualify it in its whole after-exercise. An authoritative control by the ruled then, leaves it afterwards of an inferior and depreciated kind. Ministers, subjected at their nomination to the will of the people, as an absolute ordeal, must be thereby lowered ; and, when once the system shall have been fully established in the practice and feelings of the country, the clergy, becoming conscious that, instead of standing clear and independent, as called to the place of judgment and rule over the people, they have been made subject in spirit to them, will, according to the operation of the ordinary principles which govern human nature, be first tempted into a compromise of principle, leading them to preach that kind and extent of truth which the people will hear, and to refrain from rebuking, and in the end to minister to, the forms of evil, to which the hearts of the people are inclined, and of which the range will have been mightily increased, by the infringement of the relations by which the Church is bound together.

The defenders of the non-intrusion principle, and especially Dr Chalmers, have strenuously urged, that the constant control of the Church rulers will prevent such consequences, by its being in their power to raise the standard of qualification as high as they please. But it is beyond the power of rulers to counteract the infringement of an essential principle ; and it is forgotten, that the very rulers who are expected to apply the remedy, will themselves have been subjected to the influence, which they are expected to counteract. It is, besides, left out of view, that presentees are of the people, and if a wrong spirit gets among them, this must infect the presentees, as the natural result of the position in which all the parties have been placed. As to the vague power of interference, supposed to be reserved to the Church rulers when they perceive evil, it is inconsistent with the principle of the law, and with all the reasons given to justify it, and its application must be purely arbitrary.

So much as to the dissolution of the relation between ruler and ruled generally. As to the particular consequences of this, they may be supplied so readily from what has been stated, that I shall limit myself to a few remarks.

(1.) In regard to the matters of the qualities of the presentee,

the degree of ability, the power to edify, and the need of the people, involving important interests of the presentee, and also the state of mind of the people, and the mode of instruction best suited for them, the principle allows the people to overrule whatever the Presbytery might judge to be right or necessary as to these things, and will not trust the Presbytery with the power of arranging them, even after adopting every means for learning the feelings and wishes of the people.

(2.) The statement that the people may have excellent objections, but cannot make them intelligible to the Presbytery, supposes that the Presbytery, though spiritual rulers, cannot be made to understand the spiritual need and condition of the people, or the spiritual qualifications of the presentee, or cannot be trusted to apply their knowledge.

(3.) The fundamental form of sin is simply resolving to have our own will, without subjection to the higher will which should control it ; and yet this may exist in a deceived mind, accompanied by a form of godliness, and not betrayed by any mark of gross outward iniquity. This may be the sin of the people, or of influential persons among them, in the exercise of the right to judge authoritatively of the qualities of their minister ; and it may exist, either nakedly, by desire to subject the ordinance to their will, or as expressed in some form of evil in heart and principle, which rules their conscience, but which it may not be easy to detect and expose, otherwise than through the authoritative discernment and judgment of the ordinance of ministry. Now, (taking this as an example, to which all other cases will be similar,) the non-intrusion principle affords such a spirit a shelter, behind which it may lurk, and even a stronghold, in which it may with impunity boast of its power.

(4.) The position of the Presbytery on the day appointed for the moderation of the call, is rendered by the principle in question quite anomalous. Their only right to be there is as Church rulers, and yet they are disabled from all power of rule, except it may be that of keeping order. It is difficult to see, on what principle the Moderator can preach with the authority of his office, since the Presbytery cannot follow up authoritatively what he may say to the people. When he descends from the pulpit, and the Presbytery perhaps hold a conference with the people, all are on an equality; or rather, the people occupy the place of authoritative judges of the matter, receiving the suggestions and persuasions, which the Pres-

bytery may submit, for acceptance or rejection by them. The people may even dissent from what had been declared to them from the pulpit; for though preaching is one of the modes of Church government, being authoritatively addressed to the consciences of the people, and quite different from the mere instructions of a lecture-room, it can have no such prerogative on this occasion. Rather than that the Presbytery should occupy such a place as this, it would be far better that the people should meet by themselves, under a Chairman of their own choosing. True, the Presbytery have it within their competency, if need be, to move at once from the extremity of no power at all, to the opposite extremity of the extreme use of it, by breaking up the order of the Church, and administering "the critical, ambiguous, bitter potion to a dis-tempered" congregation, of the suspension of their privileges. The just exercise of authority is the right mode of preventing such evils. If it is said, that the good sense and principle of the people will prevent them, and that it is injurious to the people to suppose, that they must be constrained to act rightly by the weight of mere power; I answer, that it remains to be seen, whether the people can be kept without authority; and that the true effect of authority is not to operate by terror, but, by means of the faith, as a quality of which it exists, to infuse into the spirit reverential feelings, the consciousness of unity and duty, and respect for the rights and interests of all.

Finally, upon the general argument, looking to the justifications of the non-intrusion principle, it is plain that distrust of their rulers is permitted to be entertained by the people, as the ground of their procedure. Their right is vindicated, because of the vital interests at stake, in regard to which they may be betrayed. There may, then, be vital questions concerned, touching, it may be, both life, principles and doctrine; and these, the rule in question permits it to be assumed, the Presbytery may decide wrongly, whence the people are entitled to a correctory power. But if the patron or Presbytery may go so far wrong, as to present and approve of a probationer objectionable in vital respects, surely the people may in their turn be involved in error, in the state of mind in which they exercise the Veto;—and where is the remedy for this? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* is held a conclusive vindication of the necessity of the Veto. But the circle does not end at this point. Who shall keep the people in the exercise of the Veto? follows

with equal necessity. The answer of the defenders of this law seems to be, that the will of the people will keep itself, in consequence of their vast interest in the question ; but if the difficulty is capable of solution at all, the true answer must be,—the ordinance of God in the Church for rule, will keep them. If this answer is not sustained, and the parties judged must always insist on being the assessors of the judges, where is Church government, and the Church herself ? We have a multitude of insulated units, vainly striving, in the independence and opposition of their several fancies, to arrive at certainty and rest ; but the Church, as conceivable under the idea, and clothed with the blessings, of unity, must become a dream, when the ordinances of rule, which are the means of unity, have lost their power, from the want of faith in their reality.

Now, in considering the complaints made of intruding ministers on reclaiming congregations,—and the very words go far to unsettle men's calm judgments on the subject,—a wise Churchman will carefully weigh, whether the non-intrusion, against which his indignation has been excited, may not involve resistance to just government, as well as the breach of its essential conditions ; and whether the mind of the reclaiming congregation may not, by erroneous views of their true place, have been so misled, that it is not fit to appreciate the right qualities of a minister, or its own true need and duty. In the whole discussion on the part of the supporters of the non-intrusion principle, the reverse is of course always taken for granted, and asserted. Thus the “ Statement” to Government by the Non-Intrusion Committee expresses the amount of the principle to be, “ that it is not lawful for the Church to settle a minister as pastor over a religious and orthodox congregation, solemnly expressing their will to the contrary, in an orderly and becoming manner.” This is very nearly the expression of a just spiritual principle; but, as appears from other parts of the Statement, it does not correctly describe the case, for the two following reasons,—1. the will, which the Church must rear up in her congregations to exercise the power of rejection, is a will of self-dependence, as distinguished from independence, brought, through an abuse of private judgment and personal responsibility, to be ignorant of the true relation between people and pastors, and consequently, from being out of the right channel of grace, in great danger of perform-

ing the duty under some form of religious self-deception; which will, therefore, when it comes into this state, cannot be in a religious and orthodox condition; and 2. the Church, having refused any spiritual oversight of the state of the people's minds in the performance of the act in question, can have no true spiritual knowledge, that the people are, in that act, religious and orthodox.

After the foregoing statement of the non-intrusion principle, as involving the exemption of the people from Church government, it may be expected, that, besides the inferences deducible from the principle itself, some proof that this is its nature, should be brought from the statements of its leading expounders and vindicators. I shall now quote some passages to show this; but the arguments are so much alike, that a few will suffice, in addition to those already given \*.

1. One writer says,—“ Is it the clear and indefeasible right of a Christian man to judge for himself under what ministry he shall sit,—by what ministrations of the Gospel his soul is edified and blessed,—to whose pastoral instructions and care he shall commit himself? Is it his sacred *duty*, as well as right, to look to his eternal welfare in this matter,—to look to it for himself, as he must answer for himself at the great day; to ‘take heed what he hears,’ as well as ‘how he hears;’ to take the Gospel on trust at no man’s hands; ‘not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they be of God?’ It follows at once, from these plain principles of Scripture and common sense, that no minister may be thrust upon a congregation contrary to the will of the people.” Are these the principles of the Church of Scotland? It may not perhaps be expedient to enforce the attendance of parishioners too strictly at their parish churches, though the breach

\* As my object is not to attack the views of particular men, but to examine the non-intrusion principle generally, as held by the majority of the Church of Scotland, I have thought it unnecessary to name the particular writers, whose sentiments are quoted. I am not conscious of having quoted any passage, that does not represent fairly the views of the majority, as well as those of its author. Indeed, the passages will sufficiently verify themselves. But, if any one should desire it, he will be furnished with the references, on signifying his wish to the Publishers. In the same spirit of excluding personalities, I add, that I do not attribute, either to the Non-Intrusionists generally, or even to the distinguished divine, two of whose “themes of the senate-house,” are afterwards commented on, the habits of thought, to which these are akin. I notice them, merely to show, what sort of thoughts are naturally suggested in argument, by the spirit of the non-intrusion principle.

of this duty be a great evil, to the extent to which it exists. It is however, a very different thing to tolerate an irregularity, and to lay down a positive rule, that it is the *right* of any individual or number of individuals to abandon their parish minister, because they account them unfit to be their pastors, and thus, so far as their private act goes, to lop off functionaries, who form part of the Church Establishment. Were the Church to enact this, as the liberty of her members, it would be a virtual dissolution of her government; and yet it is upon the right of individuals to do so, that the Veto law is said to be founded.

2. Another writer quotes from the Patronage Report, Lord Moncreiff's statement of the distinct relations to the people of a minister and of a member of Parliament, part of which is this—“ We cannot transfer to this peculiar and very sacred subject, rules or principles which may be sound and right, and which I may think to be sound and right, in mere matters of civil politics. A man, who is to be appointed a minister of religion for a particular parish, is not to be placed there to represent the opinions, or the interests, or the views of the persons, over whom he is set as a minister: Quite the reverse; he is placed there under the most solemn oaths, to teach the people what they ought to think, and what they ought to do \*.” The writer then adds—“ Now it so happens, that my opinion is exactly the reverse of this,”—and then, after a long enumeration of the difficult subjects, which should be understood, in order to qualify for fitly exercising the elective franchise, he says,—“ We have only to pass from these themes of the senate-house to the themes of the pulpit,—the doctrines of man's native and deep-seated ungodliness,—the doctrines of an adequate, because a divine expiation,—the doctrine of a regenerating power, made to rest upon those who renounce their own merits, and rely on the merits and grace of an offered Saviour,—the new sanctions of the Gospel to the practice of virtue, and the calls founded thereupon to a life of new obedience,—themes familiar to the humblest of our village patriarchs; and seen, both in the light of Scripture and the light of

\* Lord Moncreiff was the author of the Veto law in its original form. After perusing these just sentiments as to the office of a minister, can any one doubt on what principle the presentee of the Presbytery was appointed to be inducted, without being liable to rejection by the people, “ *according to the general laws of the Church?* ” The expunging of this qualification, which was done almost *sub silentio*, effected an essential change in the principle of the measure, taken as a whole.

their own consciences, to be the very truths by which they and their households are to be saved." Here, besides the denial of Lord Moncreiff's just distinction between the places of the parties in representation and government, the idea of government does not enter the picture, though it was instituted, as one of its important ends, for contending against that "native and deep-seated ungodliness," which requires all the means that can be made to bear upon it, for resisting and destroying it. Two of "the themes of the senate-house," with which this author thinks the electors should be conversant are, "the good or evil of the law of primogeniture,—the good or evil of a hereditary peerage." Of course, it must be equally profitable, or at least lawful, for them, to consider any other question of organic change in the law and constitution of the country; and if so, on the same ground, in the Church, it must be lawful for her members to entertain the questions of the introduction of bishops, or of the voluntary system, or independency. This mode of thinking is the natural fruit of the state of mind, which produces the non-intrusion principle, which is, the supremacy of the private judgment and conscience over every thing external to it, so that instead of the individual recognising himself as part of an organised whole, the whole must subject its qualities to the opinions of the individual. But whatever private speculations a man may choose to indulge in, he cannot take such liberties as member of a system. It would be unconstitutional for Parliament to entertain a petition, praying for an organic change in the constitution; and, however individuals may revel in words or arguments in the licence of private judgment, the Church fails not to be alive to the consequences, when such principles are reduced to practice against herself. Accordingly, when an elder of the Established Church some time ago used his private liberty to preside at a Voluntary meeting, he was instantly deposed by the General Assembly.

3. Another author, after founding on the admission of an opponent,—that the people may object, without thereby exercising a judicial function,—which no reasonable man can dispute,—asks why "the dissent of the people becomes an encroachment on spiritual jurisdiction, when, not by their *own act*, but by an *act* of their *rulers*, that dissent is rendered effectual, and declared, by unquestionable authority, to be a sufficient bar to ordination?" It has been shown above, that if the power recognised in the people belongs to the function of the ruler, the *act* of the ruler, either in

conceding it, or in adopting the people's act in pursuance of the concession, cannot render the concession constitutional or safe. If a judge, who alone has control over the law, were to resolve to take the law the jury gave him, would his conferring on the jury this power, and his decision in terms of their exercise of it, save his office of judge? But the General Assembly have declared non-intrusion, as they understand it, a *fundamental principle* of the Church, consequently it is no *concession* by the rulers to the people. This writer proceeds to illustrate his views, by supposing the people to stand to the Church Court in a position analogous to that of a jury to a judge, and treats the act of the people, in receiving or rejecting, as being equally decisive with the act of the jury in their verdict. He also adopts the admission of his opponent, of the right of men to determine, "whether the communion to which they belong, in its doctrine, worship and discipline, be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God. Every private man is entitled, in this sense, to *judge of CHURCHES*,—and to say that, in a similar sense, he may not lawfully judge of individual ministers, appears to me to be like "straining at a knat, while we swallow a camel." This, it must be confessed, is a singular illustration. A man may lawfully judge the Church of Scotland, and *leave her*; and *therefore*, he may lawfully judge of an individual minister, and not only not leave her, but have his act receive effect by the rejection of that minister;—the two are equally lawful. It certainly pertains to the prerogative of a man's private judgment and conscience to judge of the former, under qualifications already considered,—and if he decides on separation, he escapes from question and the Church together. The non-intrusion principle is the birth of the same power,—but the question does not relate to the law of an individual's liberty, but to the law of a system, the Church of Scotland. Is it, then, a principle of the Church of Scotland, that one of her members may lawfully hold her unworthy of remaining his spiritual mother, and forsake her?

4. The illustration of the choice of a doctor is thought so apt, as to be used in two of the non-intrusion tracts. Even this case, rightly considered, contradicts, as far as its nature admits, the non-intrusion principle. After a doctor has been called in, would the patient not be very foolish to refuse his prescription? Now, the Church of Scotland has been already called in to her own

members, and if her prescription is, that the people should leave their whole case judicially with the Presbytery, the people ought to follow it. But, to be sure, if the prescription displeases, the patient may call in another doctor; and so the Church members may likewise, if dissatisfied, go to the Dissenters—but is this consistent with the rules of the Church? The object of all such illustrations, however, is to set forth the people's freedom to judge of ministers, without being subject to the control of the Church. The fundamental distinction between them and the actual case, is, that there is in them no antecedent government over the individuals, as in the case of Church members. This fact also shows the difference between the case of marriage and that of induction, which perplexes some; the woman, as already noticed, being absolutely free before marriage, but a vacant parish being under the spiritual government of the Presbytery, and under an obligation to take a new pastor from their hands.

5. The best illustration that can be given of the objections to the non-intrusion principle, is perhaps to be found in the following extract from a recent publication relative to Sir George Sinclair's negotiation. The author says, "They (the people) may be asked to state the special reasons of their opposition, for certain purposes already specified. But the ground of the decision to which the Church Courts come must be, neither the reasons themselves, nor even the adherence of the people to these reasons, but the simple fact that the people object. The truth is, the requiring of reasons at all, to be stated by the people, is a great evil, being extremely apt to prove a snare to their consciences, or an undue limitation of their rights. For a Christian man may have the strongest possible persuasion, that the settlement of a particular minister in a parish is not for the glory of God or the good of souls; while he could not condescend upon any specific reason, which he could continue to maintain in the face of a Christian court, dealing and expostulating with him in regard to it. If compelled to give a reason, he might honestly enough fix on one, on which, after argument and explanation, he might confess himself unable to make a formal stand, and which, therefore, might be held to be virtually dislodged from his mind, while his solemn and religious persuasion, that the settlement ought not to proceed, might remain unaltered. Now, that persuasion alone, entertained by the majority of a congregation, is a sufficient obstacle to the induction of a minister, and ought to be

held conclusive. Their reasons may seem to the Church Courts to be wholly frivolous, and the people themselves may be driven virtually to abandon them, while after all there may remain in their minds a most honest and conscientious conviction, that the settlement of the presentee would not be for the spiritual good of the congregation, and continued opposition, on that conviction, the Church must be allowed to hold a sufficient ground for the rejection of the presentee. This alone is the non-intrusion principle."

Now, though it cannot be supposed that, in the great majority of instances, congregations can be under the incapacity of making themselves intelligible, which is here supposed, and it seems hardly warrantable to frame a rule for a whole Church on that assumption, it is not this that I much object to, nor even to the supposition, that there might be an apparent refutation of the reasons stated in formal words, and yet a good objection remaining untouched. I quite agree with the concluding statement, that continued opposition by the people, supposing them in a right state of mind, merely on the ground of an honest and conscientious conviction, that the settlement will not be for the spiritual good of the congregation, should be held by the Church Courts a sufficient ground of rejection, though at the same time deeply convinced, that this sort of unfitness, bringing as it does the Church to the verge of subjecting the ministry to the will of the people, is of all sorts that which ought to be kept under the strictest supervision of the Church authority. What I object to in the foregoing extract is, that the Church Court are supposed to know nothing about the matter. All that the Court know is, that the people continue to object. They are to be kept at a distance from the people, lest their questions should prove a snare of their consciences, or an undue limitation of their rights. It is also granted to them, that they may probably argue or laugh the people out of the only reasons they can make intelligible. But the real spiritual reasons of opposition are supposed to remain to the Church Court a mere contingency,—that "a Christian man *may* have the strongest possible persuasion," that "his solemn and religious persuasion *might* remain unaltered," and that "there *may* remain in the people's minds an honest conviction;"—while at the same time it is on "that persuasion alone *entertained*," and "on that *conviction*," on the part of the people, that the Church Courts are stated to act, though resting on mere assumption, without knowledge. It might be more or less difficult to get at the fact in

some cases, but there is a sympathy of feeling between spiritual persons, which equalizes all differences of rank, habits, and education, and renders them perfectly intelligible to one another. The trial should at least be made. As the matter is expressed, the Church rulers and people are placed in the false and deeply injurious positions, which appear the necessary consequences of the modern non-intrusion principle. I am aware, that the conclusive rejoinder of a Non-intrusionist is, that Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly may not be spiritual ; but such an argument can only be successful, by the sacrifice of the Church.

7. I shall only further advert to the most common topic of the publications and speeches in defence of the non-intrusion principle, —actual cases of violent intrusion. Grievous and distressing as such cases commonly are, it should be remembered that they may be handled so as to make most unspiritual subjects of address. But without going into this, which is rather a view for a Christian minister engaged in sounding the depths of evil in the human heart, and the disguises under which it may conceal itself, what belongs to this paper is to remark, that, although it is constantly assumed that they do, such cases do not establish the soundness of the non-intrusion principle. Nay, they may actually be made the means of weakening the respect of the people for government in general. No doubt, this is not intended ; but if the government against which their indignation is roused by such recitals, is whatever may interfere with the fulfilment of their will,—and what is government in all cases, but that which subjects the wills of individuals to its authority ?—must not the tendency be to destroy the respect, and consequently the faith, of the people, towards all government whatever ? Without meaning to make any offensive comparison, I beg it may be remembered, that this is exactly what has been done by revolutionists at all times : They have dwelt upon cases of oppression by government, often with too much truth, their object being, to induce the people to believe their own will to be the proper vehicle of true government. There may be retribution in this ; there cannot be a remedy.

I would rather have avoided any notice of the scriptural arguments, that have been stated in support of the non-intrusion principle, but the authority of such arguments is so overwhelming, when believed to apply,—and most properly so, when the applica-

tion is sound,—that notice of them can hardly be avoided. It will be very brief. The arguments are of four different kinds.

1. There are passages, where the ruler seems to refuse the ascription of the power of rule to himself,—as where Paul says, “we have not dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy,” and in another place speaks of acting towards the Church, “as a nurse cherisheth her children.” These and the like expressions are the result of the spiritual unity of the Church, which causes the ruler to conceal and sink the appearance of rule in every offensive sense. Had we a corresponding record of the sentiments of the churches, we should find that they, when well affected, were just as ready to exalt the place of the ruler, as he to depress it, as the Galatians received Paul “as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus,” and “would have plucked out their own eyes, and given them to him.” The same spirit runs through all Scripture. The Lord Jesus, who said to his Apostles, “Ye call me master and lord, and ye say well, for so I am,” said so in the act of rising up from washing their feet; and he says of himself in his heavenly condition, “He shall gird himself, and make them (his servants) sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them.” Such is the demeanour of rulers under the power of spiritual unity. But when a Church was not in this condition, Paul spoke very decidedly of his authority, on one occasion preferring to write to them strongly, “lest being present, he should use sharpness.” Now, the language, which delicacy and humility prompt, as in the instances first mentioned, is founded on, as if it was the logical expression of a limitation of the office; which is plainly unwarrantable.

2. The people are sometimes mentioned in public acts, conjoined with the Apostles and Elders. This arises from the acts being those of the Church as one body. But the act of a body does not disorganize it, or subvert the laws of its unity.

3. Precepts are given to the Church at large to judge and try, apparently comprehending private individuals. Of this nature is the precept in John's first Epistle—“try the spirits,” &c. It is not consistent with sound rules of construction, to suppose that such precepts were meant to overthrow government, established beyond all question in the Church. In so far as such precepts apply to individuals, they form the rule for their government in their private spheres of action, because the Scriptures always suppose the people to act with an intelligent and independent conscience. To say,

that they entitle private men to judge any thing that falls under the province of the Church rulers, or, what comes to the same thing, to exclude the judgment of the Church rulers, is to make private conscience overthrow the powers of the Church, contrary to the express rule of the Confession of Faith, directed against that very error. To illustrate the true use of such precepts by an example, —suppose that, under the authority of the lay rescript some time ago issued to the clergy, a minister had expounded to his people the doctrine of non-intrusion, “ just as he would any other truth of Scripture,” showing them that their wills were, on the occasion of the next vacancy, to exclude the judgment of the Presbytery, I can suppose a sounder Churchman in conversation to say to one of them,—“ If you cannot receive this, your part is, simply to pass it by ; you have no farther concern with it ; but judge not your minister ; forsake him not : continue to honour him ; and if you should be called on to appear before the Presbytery on a vacancy, what I would do in your place would be to refuse to act independently of their spiritual care, for I would hold them not entitled or qualified to remove me from my place of a private Church member, and thus deprive me of its privileges ; I would therefore, on their invitation, and with the respect due to one who has come to the parish commended to be its pastor, tell them plainly my feelings in regard to the presentee, but at the same time, in the spirit of obedience, and with faith in their office, ask them to consider their nature and weight, and to give me the help of their light and judgment ; and so acting, I would expect either that they would clear up difficulties, and remove scruples, or that they would give due effect to genuine convictions, honestly held and dispassionately examined ; and, at all events, I would be prepared to acquiesce in, or at least be resigned to, whatever decision they should come to :—be assured that by so doing you will not displease the Presbytery, or lead them to account you other than a good and true-hearted son of the Church.” This I submit to be a full exhaustion of the command to try the spirits, sufficient to satisfy the conscience of an individual in this particular case, *within* the constitution of the Church of Scotland.

4. Certain examples are referred to in Scripture, as showing that the people have the power in question, and though these bear upon the question of election by the people, rather than upon that of Non-Intrusion, yet as it is said that the former includes the lat-

ter, and that, if applicable, they are authorities to the weaker as well as the stronger effect, they shall first be considered in this view.

1. The mode of election of Matthias in room of Judas (Acts, i.) is said to be of this nature. I submit the following reasons in answer; 1. At the first beginning of a system, when there is no competent authority present, except the materials, or general body, of which the system is to be composed, it is not allowable, from the acts then performed by such functionless body, to deduce authoritatively its mode of action when formed and empowered. From Eph. iv. 7-15, and Acts, ii. 1-4, and other passages, it appears that (whatever may have gone before in the way of designation and instruction) the power of the offices of the Church was not given, nor the Church itself constituted, till the day of Pentecost. 2. There probably were good reasons for the appointment of an Apostle not proceeding from the remaining eleven, not only for the reason mentioned, and because the office was twelvefold, but because of its peculiar nature, as so carefully set forth by Paul at the beginning of his Epistles,—“ an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.” 3. The mode of procedure seems to have been purposely intended to exclude the idea of an election by the people, for two are first selected, and then one of these is chosen by lot, which appears from Peter’s prayer to mean the committing of the event to what we call chance, according to the accustomed Jewish practice; (see Cruden, *Lot*.) 4. The case was one of so peculiar a nature, and so little calculated to call out any principles of Church order, that no general rule can be founded on it; and, 5. If the modes of appointment to the first offices are to be looked to, the result should be drawn from the whole, and not from one only. Now, we find that the original twelve were all designated by our Lord himself, and in the case of Paul, who was the Apostle of the Gentiles, and therefore peculiarly fitted to be a model to the Gentile Church, if such had been intended, there is no resemblance to election by the people. It may be said, that the circumstances did not admit of any choice by the people in these instances; but if a lesson of this kind had been intended from the form of the original appointments, they would have been made to admit of it.

2. The election of the deacons, narrated in Acts, vi., was the unequivocal act of the people. The office of deacon is not that of a spiritual ruler, but of administrator of the temporal goods of the Church, and the deacons were the heads or representatives of the

people, owing obedience to the spiritual rulers. True Church principle does not restrict the people from the fullest liberty in things of this nature, where no principle of Church rule is infringed.

3. The word in *Acts*, xiv. 23, “when they had ordained,” or rather “having ordained,” is a participle of the verb, which means to hold up the hand in vote, and hence it is said to prove the people’s right to elect. But the governing word is, not the people, but the Apostles, so that, whatever the action was, and whatever share the people had in it, it is clear the Apostles were its regulators and judges. There can be no doubt, that the passages in the *Second Book of Discipline* bearing on election, which are quoted above, p. 19, were intended to give the spirit of the expression, and they seem to do so very accurately.

These, I believe, are all the passages of Scripture, alleged to recognise in the people the power in question. In addition to the reasons already stated for their insufficiency, if the views of Church government stated in this paper are agreeable to the Scriptures, it must be granted, that they render those reasons insuperable. Though directions to appoint ministers are expressly given in the *Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, there is no notice whatever of the people’s initiative, which is the form of the non-intrusion principle alleged to exist in the Scriptures.

But in truth the power of Veto, and the right of election, cannot be treated on the same principle. When the people are in the position of having a mere power of Veto, the initiative must be elsewhere. Now, in the case of election, the whole train of the people’s state of mind and conduct is supposed to be under the supervision of the Church authority; but in the case of Veto, when the people do not elect, but deal with the presentee of another, an entirely new element is introduced, and the important matter for observation is, how the people deal with the person so presented to them. But this the non-intrusion principle, as now maintained, withdraws from the charge of the Church rulers. There is probably no other instance of a Church, which recognises the principle of government, having formally exempted its members from Church government on any, and still less on an important and trying occasion.

It is said, that in the Church in early ages, the people had the power of election of their bishops; but supposing this to be the case,

it does not follow, that the practice was a right one. It proves that a high state of unity had been transmitted from apostolic times ; but as it is certain, that great disorders and corruptions appeared in the Church very soon after the deaths of the Apostles, and had begun even in their lifetime, it is as likely that this arose from a faulty principle having insinuated itself into the Church, in the respect now under consideration, as from any other cause. Such a state of matters in regard to election, as is supposed in the Second Book of Discipline, following after the example of apostolic times, would readily change into absolute election by the people, were the power of rule to be relaxed ; and there was very ready occasion given for this, when the order of Apostles ceased in the Church, and was not succeeded by any other recognised to have equal authority.

In the foregoing examination of this question, I have taken into view the principle of Non-Intrusion, as maintained in the Church, and as embodied in the Veto law, and I have not adverted to the farther question, which is much involved with it,—the right of the people to elect their ministers. The progress of opinion has been carrying the Church in this last-mentioned direction, as was inevitable, when the mind of her members was surrendered to the views, on which the non-intrusion principle is founded. The objections that lie to the non-intrusion principle lie also to this other arrangement, some with more, and some with less force. Abstractly, as the ministry, when constituted, is independent, and as their superintendence would be exercised over the whole course of every new election, there might be said to be no subjection of the power of rule to the people, or withdrawal of the people from the power of rule. But practically, the entire dependence of the candidates on the people for nomination, would so effectually subject the ministry in spirit to the people, and involve the place of rule so much with that of obedience, that it would be impossible for the ministry to counteract the effect of the evil. The removal of this very evil, by setting forth the true place of rule in the Church, and the necessary subjection to it of the people, is by far the most important difference between the Second Book of Discipline and the First. Probably, under the arrangement supposed, the people would use their power with more simplicity and strait-forwardness, than under the Veto

law; but the evil effect on presentees, and consequently on the ministry itself, would be accelerated and increased.

In her struggle to establish the non-intrusion principle, in the sense in which she now interprets it, the Church of Scotland has up to this time risked every danger, even to the loss of her endowments, and the breaking up of her national constitution; and if good intentions and personal disinterestedness were true tests of the wisdom and safety of a plan, that of her ministers stands so approved. But is it possible that a cause, that has in view the amelioration of the condition of the great body of men, can fail to have these recommendations? and yet how often have such plans proved to have been based on wrong principles! The vastness of the interest seems, in such cases, to justify any plan, that promises the benefit most largely and easily, by the same process of self-deception, which, in morals, makes us think the goodness of the end to warrant the means most agreeable. And when the eternal safety of men is one of the elements of the interest, and it is thought that opponents, or human institutions or laws, are putting hindrances before its attainment, that consideration, given way to in an unwise manner, will destroy judgment, extinguish the perception of just principles, reconcile us to the overthrow even of order and peace, and make easy the sacrifice of any worldly object. But it does not follow, that a mind, possessed with these feelings, is in a right condition, or that a will, influenced by this irresistible motive, will work righteousness. The end is in itself good, but to make it be pursued in a good way, something besides the extreme desire of its attainment is necessary; and that is, the subjection of the will to the conditions prescribed for that object,—the only test of freedom from the taint of self-will involving spiritual selfishness, which makes evil even the pursuit of the best objects. I have stated in the foregoing pages the reasons which lead me to think, that the Church of Scotland has fallen into this error. The consequence of her having embarked on a wrong principle is, that she is filled with dissension and disorder, and in the scenes in which her struggles are frequently exhibited, dispassionate men cannot recognise the spirit and demeanour, that distinguish a good cause, either when in triumph or under persecution. Such are the inevitable fruits of the specious but uncatholic principle, on which the Veto law is founded, for it proceeds from the false centre of the individual's

will, which, when it seeks to change and reform, judges, disunites and destroys. These observations are directed against no particular individuals, but a system, and when a Church system is the subject of consideration, it can be treated on no other footing, than as exhibiting moral and spiritual good or evil. With the same freedom, I remark, that as, from the necessary constitution of their nature, men cannot live except under unity involving rule and subjection in one form or another, the Church of Scotland, if she maintains her present principles, is in great danger of passing into a worse condition than she has ever yet been in. Her present condition is more ominous of evil to herself and the country, than even those errors, great as they are, which are overspreading portions of the lower classes of society ; for these are disorders of the extremities, but this of the heart. But the remembrance of her ancient faithfulness, and of her many honest and faithful members who desire her true prosperity, if it does not warrant hope, at least still forbids despondency.

It is the desire and prayer of the writer of these observations, that, putting away unsound and delusive principles, the Church of Scotland may perfect her ancient testimony for the Headship of Christ, by being enabled to destroy that in her members, which ever exalteth and opposeth itself against it,—the self-depending carnal heart, and thus to encrease more and more in that true faith and unity, which, joining all into one in their Head, convert His rule by His ordinances, into a ministry of humility and love, and the obedience to it of His people, into the grateful and confiding service of children !

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